

CHU YUAN

PLAY IN 5 ACTS

KUO MO-JO

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS, PEKING,
1953

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A Play in Five Acts



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by

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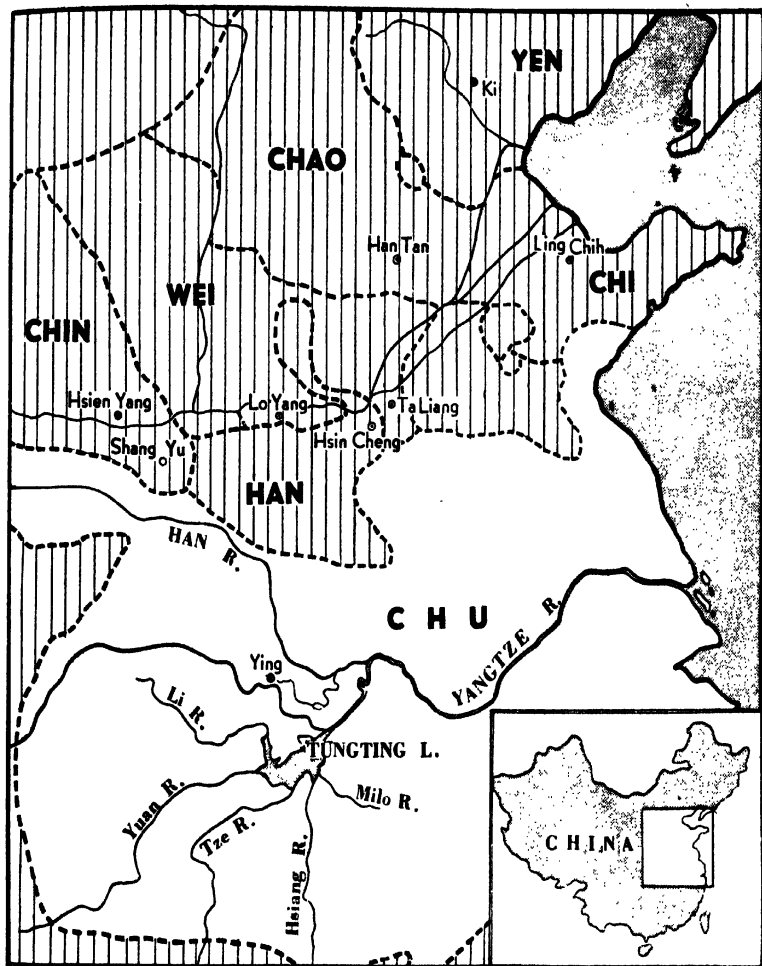
*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and
Gladys Yang*

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MAP OF THE WARRING STATES



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CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

CHU YUAN, a knight, aged about forty

SUNG YU, pupil to Chu Yuan, aged about twenty

CHIAN CHUAN, maidservant to Chu Yuan, aged sixteen

CHIN SHANG, a knight and obsequious minister to King Huai, aged over thirty

TZE LAN, youngest son of King Huai, aged sixteen or seventeen

QUEEN CHENG HSIU, mother of Tze Lan and King Huai's favourite concubine, aged over thirty

KING HUAI OF CHU, aged fifty

CHANG YI, prime minister of Chin and advocate of an alliance with Chu, aged over forty

TZE CHIAO, a councillor and foolish old flattering minister, aged about sixty

AN OLD MAN, aged about sixty

AH WANG, Chu Yuan's old door-keeper, aged about sixty

AH HUANG, Chu Yuan's old kitchen-maid, aged over fifty

A FISHERMAN, aged about thirty

AN OLD FISHERMAN, aged about fifty

A GUARD, aged over twenty

CHENG CHAN-YING, a diviner and father to Queen Cheng Hsiu, aged over sixty

AN OLD WOMAN, A NIGHT WATCHMAN, SEVERAL WOMEN, ATTENDANTS, CITIZENS, GUARDS, SINGERS, DANCERS AND MUSICIANS

TIME: The sixteenth year of King Huai of Chu (313 B.C.)

SCENE: Ying, the capital of the kingdom of Chu

ACT I

SCENE: An orange grove one morning in late spring. Several oranges from the previous year remain on the branches. Behind the orchard stands a fence with a door in the right centre, and fields stretching outside. On the left there is another door leading to the inner chambers. At the right-hand side of the orchard stands a raised pavilion, with steps leading to it from the left, on which are placed two pots of orchids, one on each side. At the foot of the steps lies a bamboo broom. In addition to the orange trees in the orchard, there may be a few other trees.

Sixteen-year-old Chan Chuan comes on from the left, carrying a lyre, which she puts on the table in the pavilion. After seeing all is orderly, she leaves the way she came.

Chu Yuan, aged about forty, wearing white civilian dress and a cloth hat, enters from the left. In his left hand he holds a silk scroll. He strolls for a while among the orange trees, sometimes toying with the previous year's oranges and inhaling their fragrance; finally, he plucks one casually and plays with it, placing it in his right palm. Then with slow steps he mounts the pavilion, and sits down on the topmost step. Now he breathes in the fragrance of the orange, now he looks about him;

then he places the orange on the step and unrolls the silk scroll, on which is written his "Ode to the Orange" in ancient seal characters, the words in scarlet, written with vermilion. Slowly he begins to declaim the poem, and as he reads his two hands unroll and roll up the scroll:

Here the orange tree is found,
Shedding beauty all around;
Living in this southern grove,
From its fate it will not move;
For as its roots lie fast and deep,
So its purpose it will keep.
With green leaves and blossoms white,
It brings beauty and delight.
Yet foliage and sharp thorns abound
To guard the fruit so ripe and round.
Golden clusters, clusters green,
Glimmer with a lovely sheen,
While all within is pure and clear
Like heart of a philosopher.
Grace and splendour here are one,
Beauty all and blemish none.

Having read to this point he pauses and puts the writing on his knees, then takes up the orange and fondles it with his hand, closing his eyes in reflection. Then he opens his eyes again and casually splits the orange into two, not intending to eat it, but simply to amuse himself. At this point Sung Yu enters from the outer door, carrying a small brown dog. He is about twenty, wearing a small jacket and with two tufts of hair on his head. When he sees Chu Yuan he runs to him.

SUNG YU (*standing at the foot of the steps*). Master, you have come out?

CHU YUAN. Oh, I was looking for you. Where have you been?

SUNG YU. After I had swept the garden I took Ah Chin (*name of the little dog*) for a run outside.

CHU YUAN. That's very good. It is a very good thing for you young people to form the habit of rising early, and to take exercise from time to time. (*Slowly he puts the two halves of the orange together, then holding the orange in one hand and the scroll in the other, stands up.*) I have written a poem for you; let us go and sit in the pavilion. (*He walks to the pavilion, and sits down at the table with the lyre, putting the orange on the table. Sung Yu follows and stands at his left.*) Put Ah Chin down, and read this new poem of mine. (*He gives the scroll to Sung Yu, who puts the brown dog down, to do as it likes. Chu Yuan begins to thrum the lyre.*)

SUNG YU (*unrolls the first half of the scroll and reads in silence for a time, then raises his head*). Master, in this you are praising the orange.

CHU YUAN. Yes, that is so in the first part of the poem, but not in the second part. You read on.

SUNG YU (*continues to unroll the scroll and read aloud*):

Your youthful and impetuous heart
Sets you from common men apart,
And well-contented I to see
Your resolute integrity.
Deep-rooted thus you stand unshaken,
Impartial, by no fancies taken;
Steadfast you choose your course alone,
Following no fashion but your own.

Over your heart you hold firm sway,
Nor suffer it to go astray;
No selfish wishes stain your worth,
Standing erect 'twixt heaven and earth
Then let not age divide us twain:
Your friend I ever would remain.
Be noble still without excess,
And stern, but yet with gentleness.
Though young in years and in complexion,
Yet be my master in perfection.
Then Po Yi as your standard take,
His virtues as your model make.

(After reading he is a little embarrassed, but very pleased.) Master, did you really write this for me?

CHU YUAN. Yes, I wrote it for you.

(During the following dialogue he continues to thrum the lyre intermittently.)

SUNG YU. How can I be worthy of such praise?

CHU YUAN. I hope you can. *(Pointing with his right hand to the orange trees in the garden.)* Look at the orange trees, what an excellent lesson they teach! They are not in the least proud, nor timid, nor careless, nor stooping. *(Pause.)* Yes, they like the sun, but they are not afraid of the frost and snow. Their leaves are as brilliant as emerald, the hotter the sun the better pleased they are; but however bitter the frost and snow they show no anxiety. At the proper season they blossom, and their flowers are exquisitely fragrant and snow-white. At the proper season they bear fruit, and their fruit is perfectly round and full of colour. From green they turn to yellow, from yellow to red, and inside—see how transparent they are, how pure and clear.

(*He shows the inside of the split orange.*) They blossom and bear fruit, and anybody can eat them, and their fruit is sweet and delectable. When people eat them they do not complain, and when nobody eats them they feel no resentment, for they are entirely magnanimous and free from selfishness. But if you were to say that they are willing to please anybody without showing any spirit of their own, you would be wrong. They are not like that. Look at the trees—are they not full of thorns? (*Pointing again to the orange trees.*) They will not allow you to interfere with them as you please. They grow in the South here, and they love the South, thus it is no easy matter to move them. What an independent and unyielding spirit this shows! Don't you think it sets a good example for us?

SUNG YU. Yes, Master, after your explanation I feel I have received a very good lesson. Don't you mean that if even a tree can be like this, surely we human beings can be the same? (*He thinks a little while.*) Indeed we can.

CHU YUAN. Yes, you have grasped my meaning. You are an intelligent lad, for although you are still young you have chosen the right study and you work hard, so that although some scatter-brained people try to tempt you to join them in mischief, you are rarely willing to go; this makes me very pleased. (*Pause.*) So I hope you will be able to be like this orange tree, independent, impartial, stern and unyielding. You must be humble, free from vain desires, unyielding and unaffected by popular tendencies. You must show more determination and cherish a pure, upright and unselfish heart; then you can avoid great faults, and take your

stand as a true man between heaven and earth. (*Pause.*) If you attain this, I would like to remain your friend forever, regardless of our difference in age. If you can attain this, even though you are still young, you can be the teacher of ordinary people. (*Pause.*) However, you must not be over-proud, but stern with gentleness. Only, when you reach the crossroads of your life you must not stoop at all, nor yield to temptation. You must imitate that great man of old, Po Yi, who starved himself to death on the Shou Yang Mountain: for better starve to death rather than lose your integrity. Do you understand me?

SUNG YU. I understand very well. My wish is to imitate you, Master, with all my heart and mind. I want to learn your wisdom and knowledge, and I want to learn your attitude towards life. Only your character is so lofty that I shall never be able to be like you.

CHU YUAN. You must not think too highly of your master nor too poorly of yourself; this is most important. I am actually a very ordinary person, but I think all people at birth are equally ordinary. If one wants to be exceptional, that must depend upon one's own efforts. (*Pause.*) We ought to take higher models, and the best thing is to take as our model a successful figure in history; then if we do our utmost to follow in his steps or even determine to surpass him, I believe that as a result of this continuous effort, we can certainly succeed. There is a scholar in the North called Yen Yuan, a favourite disciple of Confucius, who recently said something which I consider quite significant. He said, "What was Shun? Just a man. What am I? Also a man. One who sets his mind on it can achieve

the same." This is indeed an excellent lesson. We all know that King Shun was a remarkable person; but what was he? Was he not a man? And what am I? Am I not a man? If he could achieve so much, why can't we? It is possible, it is possible. Everything depends upon men's actions. Even water can wear out rock, and even rope can wear out wood. Everything depends upon one's effort, upon one's unceasing effort.

(Enter Chan Chuan, with a pitcher of water. She goes to the pavilion, pours out the water, and offers it to Chu Yuan. After he has drunk she leaves again, carrying the pitcher.)

SUNG YU. I shall bear in mind carefully what you have said; but I always feel that in learning from ancient people the difficulty lies in knowing where to begin. The men of old are already so far removed from us that we cannot catch their voices or their expressions; how then should we start to learn from them? I am always by your side, Master, I can hear your voice and see your expression every day, and every day try to learn from you, still I haven't learnt to be like you at all.

CHU YUAN *(smiling)*. Why do you want to imitate my expression and voice? Simply to imitate these things is no better than a monkey. *(He stands up and strolls up and down in the pavilion.)* To learn from the men of old means to copy their spirit, to copy their indomitable spirit. We must always discipline ourselves, always endeavour to be good men. *(Pause.)* Every one of us is ordinary at birth, and we bring with us many bad traits. For instance, every one of us wants to struggle, and yet at the same time wants to be lazy.

and here lies the seed of our downfall. To struggle is by no means bad; indeed, strictly speaking, it is the incentive for learning to be good, because if you want to surpass others or surpass good people, then you have to work very hard. Really to surpass other people, however, you have to be more gifted than they are; this is unquestionable.

SUNG YU. Yes, this is really unquestionable.

CHU YUAN. But the question is this. To surpass others is a very pleasant thing, but to make an effort is a very hard thing, and therefore people want to take a short cut, either pretending to be good, making false pretences, or, even worse, injuring other people, injuring those who are better than themselves. This is hypocrisy, this is sin, this is depravity. (*His voice has risen, but now quietens again.*) This tendency in men towards idleness is the snare for ruin, which men receive at birth. We must first rid ourselves entirely of this tendency, uprooting it daily and hourly, without any mercy; for if you do this your knowledge will naturally improve, your ability will naturally increase and your body will naturally become healthy. You say you don't know where to start, but actually the starting point is in yourself. (*Pause.*) However, we should also learn from other people, learning from everything outside ourselves. Naked we came into the world, and not only were our bodies naked, but our hearts also; nevertheless we brought with us one good thing—the ability to learn. We can learn, and thanks to our ability to learn we can grow in mind and body. We can learn from everything around us, for instance, from the orange trees which we have just mentioned (*pointing to the trees*).

Are they not excellent teachers for us? To take another example, you who stand before me, I also consider my teacher.

SUNG YU (*rather embarrassed*). Master, how unworthy I am.

CHU YUAN. No, I am not being polite to you. All young people are my teachers. When people are young the desire to outdo others is stronger, while the tendency towards idleness is not yet fixed; thus young people are always innocent, active, generous and comparatively unselfish. This is what I want to learn. (*He sits down again on the balustrade of the pavilion.*) To take writing poetry as an example, when we are old and have had much experience, our poetry is also old. In planning the structure, in forming the imagery, we become more grandiloquent; but we miss what we possessed in our youth as far as the freshness, purity and simplicity of our imagination is concerned. It is this that causes me constant alarm. For in this respect it seems that the older one gets, the worse one's writing. (*Pause.*) So I want with all my heart to learn from you young people, with all my heart I want to learn from the sincere and simple common people. I want with all my heart to preserve the freshness, purity and simplicity of my youth. I have spoken to you of this more than once; do you remember?

SUNG YU. I never forget it.

CHU YUAN. So, when many people say my poetry is too vulgar and too free, having lost the authentic note of the traditional poetry, I am not in the least disturbed. I am doing my utmost to imitate the common people and to imitate children, so naturally it is vulgar. I am

doing my utmost to break the rules of the traditional poetry, so naturally it is free. Those traditional poems are all strictly limited to so many words a line, and when ordinary people and children hear them, they seem to be hearing a strange tongue. It is my belief that they are really divesting poetry of all human feeling. But, from another point of view, since I am older than you, and, as a boy, was influenced by the rules and conventions of the old poetry, it is difficult for me to rid my writing of them entirely. This is like the mark branded on the forehead of slaves. Even if they are set free they cannot get rid of the brand. But it is different in your generation, for you have never been branded: so when you write poems you are the masters in every sense. In this respect I envy your generation.

SUNG YU. This indeed shows your indomitable and indefatigable spirit. Today I have received most valuable instruction. Will you give me this "Ode to the Orange"?

CHU YUAN. Of course, it is for you. I wrote it for you, so why shouldn't I give it to you?

SUNG YU (bows). Thank you very much indeed, Master. From now onwards I shall read it aloud once every morning when I get up.

CHU YUAN. There is no need to make such a rule, for as poetry it is not very good; the main thing is that you should try to learn from the men of old.

SUNG YU. Thank you very much for your instruction, but I still want to imitate you; for I feel that one like Po Yi is too bigoted. King Cheo of the Shangs was such a cruel tyrant, why shouldn't King Wu of Chou have fought against him? When the tyrant was killed,

why should Po Yi starve himself to death? I don't quite understand this.

CHU YUAN. Regarding actual historical fact, this is rather uncertain. Let us walk in the orchard, and while we walk I will explain it to you in detail. (*He walks down the steps followed by Sung Yu.*) According to historical fact, King Cheo of the Shangs was not such a bad man. Indeed the people of our kingdom ought to be specially grateful to him; for our kingdom was formerly an ally of the Shangs. Both King Cheo and his father Ti Yi made great efforts to conquer the barbarians of the Southeast; this gave the Chou people an opportunity to strengthen themselves until they took the Shangs by surprise and conquered them. Then our ancestors and the people of Sung and Hsu were so oppressed that they gradually moved from the North to the South. In the North there is a district called Mount Chu, as you must know, the place where our ancestors used to live. But if King Cheo had not conquered the barbarians of the Southeast, we should not have had a place of refuge, and our ancestors would have become the slaves of the Chou people. As the Chou people overthrew the Shang dynasty, naturally they painted the last king of the Shangs very black, accusing him of many imaginary crimes, although actually he was not so bad. The fact that Po Yi opposed King Wu is the proof of it.

SUNG YU. Ah, I have certainly never heard this explanation before; it is really most original and interesting.

CHU YUAN. We need not concern ourselves now with these old stories, but a man like Po Yi is worthy of our

respect and emulation. He could have been the sovereign of the kingdom of Ku Chu, but he abandoned such a position of wealth and splendour, for he understood there is something in life which is more precious than kingship. If a man is not true to himself, what glory can there be in kingship? Certainly, when the Chou people overthrew the Shang dynasty, Po Yi need not have died. He could have lived on, and nobody would have said anything; while if he had stooped a little, the Chous would probably have given him high position. But he realised that such high position and such a meaningless life were more to be dreaded than death, so he preferred to starve himself to death rather than lose his integrity. This is indeed worthy of our emulation. Do you understand this?

SUNG YU. I understand it now, and I understand the historical background, so that I am convinced that a man like Po Yi is worthy of our respect.

CHU YUAN. During these troubled times, character is of paramount importance. It is easy to act like a man in peaceful times. For then a man is born in peace and dies in peace, without change or upheaval. But during a time of great changes and upheavals to act like a man is a very difficult thing. The main reason for this is that all men instinctively fear death, so that they pass their lives without reflection, and when death comes they are unwilling to face it; thus their character is ruined. (*Pause.*) The age in which we are living is one of great changes and upheavals, so I make special mention of Po Yi, hoping that you, as well as I, will take him as an example. We should live honourably and die honourably. Do you understand me?

SUNG YU. I understand, Master.

CHU YUAN. Good. I have spoken too much. Today's weather is very fine; let us go out and walk in the fields.

SUNG YU. I would like to go with you.

(He starts off, carrying the lyre under his left arm.)

(The two of them are walking slowly towards the gate when Chan Chuan enters hurriedly.)

CHAN CHUAN *(approaches and calls Chu Yuan).*

Master, Master! The knight Chin Shang is here. He is waiting in the front reception room; do you want to see him?

CHU YUAN *(frowning).* What brings him here so early? *(Pause.)* Very well, bring him here.

CHAN CHUAN. Very good.

(Exit hastily from the left.)

CHU YUAN. Sung Yu, what do you think of the knight Chin Shang?

SUNG YU. He seems very smooth.

CHU YUAN. He is smooth outwardly, but rotten at heart. He cares only for high official posts and a big salary, and is entirely self-seeking. Provided it were to his interest, he would betray the people and his motherland. Chang Yi's visit will test him.

SUNG YU. We have heard, Master, that Chang Yi has come to propose an alliance between Chin and Chu and the severance of relations with the states East of the Pass. This is easy to understand. Chang Yi believes in an east-west alliance, and his purpose is to make the six eastern states join with Chin, so that the kingdom of Chin can unite all China into one. But why should Chang Yi promise that Chin will give us

two hundred miles of territory if we sever relations with Chi?

CHU YUAN. This is a trick. Do you imagine the kingdom of Chin will really give us two hundred miles of territory? He only wants to break up the alliance of the six states in the East, so that the generals of Chin can smash us one by one. If you believe his promise, you will be deceived.

SUNG YU. People are saying that the king is tempted by the idea. To gain two hundred miles of territory without using a single soldier or breaking a single arrow, only by severing relations with Chi, seems such a good bargain.

CHU YUAN. There can be no such bargain. Think, if we sever relations with Chi, and the kingdom of Chin refuses to give us the land, what can we do? But this is a minor consideration. The fundamental question is by what means to achieve China's unity? Chang Yi and his ilk propose to unite China by means of mass slaughter, while I advocate protecting the people's interests. By protecting their interests we can win the hearts of the people of the world, and our kingdom can achieve the great feat of uniting China and ensuring a lasting peace. If, on the other hand, Chang Yi's way is used, even if the kingdom of Chin succeeds, it will be at the cost of present massacres and future calamities. However, men like the knight Chin Shang are hand in glove with Chang Yi, and will intercede for him to the king. I hear recently they have been trying to get round the queen in private. I certainly feel rather isolated. My

only hope is that you, the younger generation, will soon grow up.

(Chan Chuan enters again from the left door.)

CHAN CHUAN. Master, the knight Chin Shang has gone. He said he is very busy, so he left a message for me to give you.

CHU YUAN. What is the message?

CHAN CHUAN. He said Chang Yi is going to the kingdom of Wei. The king has taken your advice and is unwilling to sever relations with the kingdom of Chi. So Chang Yi feels ashamed to return to Chin, and has decided to go back to the kingdom of Wei, which is his native land. The king is giving a farewell feast for him today at noon, and he came to let you know.

CHU YUAN *(pleased)*. Good, this is certainly good news. You know, Chang Yi is a traitor to his country. He is descended from a noble of Wei, but when he went to Chin he urged the king of Chin to attack Wei, and so became the prime minister of Chin. But now that he has no place to go, he is turning back to his motherland. *(To Sung Yu.)* Sung Yu, there is something I want you to do immediately.

SUNG YU. Yes, Master.

CHU YUAN. On my desk there is a manuscript. It is the letter the king instructed me to write yesterday to the kingdom of Chi to further our friendship. I want it copied at once. Since Chang Yi has decided to leave, the king will probably soon send someone with the letter to the kingdom of Chi.

SUNG YU. Yes. After I have copied it, I shall bring it for you to see. *(To Chan Chuan.)* Please take the lyre. *(Gives her the lyre and leaves by the left door.)*

CHAN CHUAN (*hesitating*). Master, when the knight was leaving, he mentioned something else.

CHU YUAN. What did he say?

CHAN CHUAN. He said the queen had told him that she intends to take me into the palace to serve her.

CHU YUAN. The queen has said the same thing to me too, but she wasn't serious, so I didn't tell you. If the queen really wanted to take you into the palace, Chan Chuan, would you be pleased?

CHAN CHUAN (*decidedly*). No, Master, I wouldn't. I cannot leave you.

CHU YUAN. Don't you like the queen? She is clever, beautiful and talented.

CHAN CHUAN. No, I don't like her. And I don't believe she likes me either.

CHU YUAN. If she doesn't like you, why should she send for you?

CHAN CHUAN. I don't know what is in her mind, but I shiver whenever I see her. She has eyes like a snake so cruel and cold! You can't help trembling whenever she looks at you. Master, with you I feel as calm as a dove; but with her I feel as helpless as a sparrow in the clutches of an eagle. I hope you will save me, Master!

CHU YUAN (*smiling*). You describe her very well. Yes, the queen is quite a strong character. Since you do not want to go to the palace, if she mentions it again in earnest, I shall decline for you.

(Chu Yuan strolls in front of the pavilion. He casually walks up the steps, picks up the split orange which he has put down on the balustrade, and toys

with it, dividing it and putting it together, but without tasting it. Chan Chuan also walks up the steps, puts the lyre on the table, then descends. Prince Tze Lan enters from the back door on the right-hand side; he is about sixteen and slightly lame in the left foot.)

CHAN CHUAN. Master, Prince Tze Lan is here.

CHU YUAN (*turns round. Tze Lan approaches the pavilion and standing under the steps bows to him.*)

TZE LAN. Good morning, Master.

CHU YUAN (*nodding*). Good morning. You two can come and sit in the pavilion. (*Chan Chuan leads Tze Lan to the pavilion.*) Sit down, and make yourselves at home. (*As Chu Yuan does not sit down, the others dare not do so.*) I have an orange here, just picked from the tree; I will give it to you two.

(They take the orange.)

TZE LAN. Thank you, Master. Have you been well recently?

CHU YUAN. Very well. I have been very happy recently; but I have not seen you for several days. Have you been studying at home?

TZE LAN. No, Master. Lately I have been having a cold and my mother told me to stay at home. Today I come by my mother's orders to invite you. (*Coughs.*)

CHU YUAN. The queen is asking for me? What is it, do you know?

TZE LAN. No, I'm not sure; but I think it may have to do with Chang Yi's departure. Father is giving him a farewell feast at noon today. My mother is rather worried because Chang Yi is leaving. Yesterday afternoon Chang Yi suddenly came with the knight Chin Shang to take his leave of my father. He said since

Father has taken your advice and will not sever relations with Chi, he cannot go back to Chin, so he has decided to return to his motherland, Wei. He also said there are many beautiful girls in the kingdom of Wei, lovely as fairies, and he intends to find an exquisite beauty to send to Father.

CHU YUAN. So that's what he said?

TZE LAN. Yes. So my mother is rather worried. Last night she told the knight Chin Shang to present Chang Yi with one thousand five hundred coins as travelling expenses.

CHU YUAN. One thousand five hundred coins?

TZE LAN. Yes, one thousand for him, five hundred for his retinue.

CHU YUAN. Did he accept it?

TZE LAN. I don't know the details. I suppose he did. It's a great sum.

CHU YUAN. Indeed. In that case those scoundrels are still plotting.

TZE LAN. Yes, I feel there is mischief brewing. I suppose that is why Mother wants your help.

CHU YUAN. Very well. I will change my clothes and come with you. You wait here. *(To Chan Chuan.)* Chan Chuan, you stay here and keep the prince company, but I hope you two will not pick flowers.

TZE LAN. Please don't worry, Master. I am most careful with flowers.

CHU YUAN. Then that's all right, I shall soon be back. *(Walks slowly down the steps. Exit through the left-hand door. The two others stand respectfully at the entrance to the pavilion.)*

TZE LAN (becoming more familiar now that Chu Yuan has gone, takes Chan Chuan's hand to lead her to the pavilion). Chan Chuan, let's sit down and talk.

CHAN CHUAN (shaking off his hand). Don't drag me. I know how to sit.

TZE LAN. All right. I was afraid you had stood too long.

(Sits down on the steps facing the left. Chan Chuan sits on the steps too.)

CHAN CHUAN. Your Highness, have some orange.
(Eats one quarter herself.)

TZE LAN. No, I don't want to eat. I think it very significant that the master should have given us half each. I am one half, you are one half; together we make one whole.

CHAN CHUAN. You always talk such nonsense.

TZE LAN. You think it's nonsense, but it isn't. Chan Chuan, let me ask you: has the master said anything bad about me lately?

CHAN CHUAN. The master hasn't said anything bad about you, nor anything good about you.

TZE LAN. Of course the master wouldn't say anything good about me. He only likes that fellow Sung Yu, who always flatters people to their faces, and is more frivolous than you. He is always saying how pure he is, and how diligent and how proper. Your master only likes such good-looking mother's darlings.

CHAN CHUAN. You always say bad things about your friends behind their backs.

TZE LAN. Chan Chuan, have I offended you by speaking ill of someone you love?

CHAN CHUAN (*becoming slightly angry*). Whom do I love? What nonsense!

TZE LAN. I am not talking nonsense; do you think I don't know? That good-looking mother's darling is your lover.

CHAN CHUAN. No, I don't like him.

TZE LAN (*standing up*). If you don't like him, whom do you like?

CHAN CHUAN. I like whom I like.

TZE LAN (*leaning towards her*). Do you like me?

CHAN CHUAN. I like you, I like you to suffer.

(*Pushing him away.*)

TZE LAN (*trying to catch her*). I will make you suffer.

(*Chan Chuan turns and runs down the steps. Tze Lan failing to catch her falls down, nearly falling down the steps.*)

CHAN CHUAN (*laughing*). Haha! Your Lame Highness! You are suffering.

TZE LAN (*gets up, angry*). You country wench! I shall make you pay for this.

(*Limps down quickly, only to fall again at the foot of the steps.*)

CHAN CHUAN (*prepares to run, but seeing Tze Lan fall, laughs*). Hahaha! You lame prince! Come on, try again, I dare you!

TZE LAN (*sits up slowly on the lowest step, rubbing his right knee to show that he does not intend to pursue her*). Well, my foot is no good; I'm no match for you.

CHAN CHUAN (*beginning to pity him, but unwilling to approach him*). Congratulations, congratulations!

Have you hurt your right foot? When both feet are lame, you will be able to walk more steadily.

(Laughs again.)

TZE LAN *(looking pathetic)*. You cruel girl. My foot is no good, but you show no pity, only laughing at my misfortune and becoming more happy. Do you know, it is inauspicious for you women to laugh. Formerly when King Yiu of Chou was in love with Pao Sze, he made fun of the barons on the beacon tower, and when Pao Sze laughed the kingdom fell. Then the mother of Duke Chin of Chi laughed at Chueh Ko, knight of the kingdom of Tsin, and the kingdom of Chi suffered in war for it. Now you are laughing at me; I think you will come to a bad end.

CHAN CHUAN *(becoming serious)*. It's your own fault.

TZE LAN. All right, all right; let it be my fault. I have been punished; I can't even stand up. *(Pretending to be unable to stand.)* Chan Chuan, good girl, please come and help me.

CHAN CHUAN *(hesitating)*. I will help you, but you mustn't play any tricks.

TZE LAN. I won't play tricks. I am begging you. The master will be coming soon.

CHAN CHUAN *(walking cautiously to Tze Lan's side)*. All right, I will help you up. *(Helps him up.)*

TZE LAN *(getting up immediately puts his arms round her and tries to kiss her)*. This time you can't escape! You wench!

CHAN CHUAN *(struggling)*. You deceiver, you lame-footed deceiver!

(Thrusts Tze Lan aside and runs towards the orange trees. Tze Lan chases her, running under the trees. Chu Yuan enters from the left door.)

CHU YUAN. What are you doing?

TZE LAN *(looking sorry for himself)*. Master, Chan Chuan keeps making fun of me. She threw me down, and called me "lame deceiver."

CHAN CHUAN. No, he played tricks on me first.

CHU YUAN *(to Chan Chuan, gently)*. Chan Chuan. I think you are in the wrong. He is disabled, and can't walk easily; you should look after him, why make fun of him? *(Pause.)* One should rebel sometimes, but one should also have sympathy for others. You of the younger generation, especially, should not show your bravery by oppressing those weaker than yourselves. I have often told you this.

CHAN CHUAN *(apologising)*. Master, I was wrong. I shall always remember your words, and never forget them!

CHU YUAN *(leading Tze Lan away)*. Very well, Tze Lan, I'll go with you now to see the queen.

(Chu Yuan and Tze Lan walk off from the right.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: The palace court. In the front are four huge, parallel pillars; in the centre is the inner chamber flanked by chambers on each side with steps leading to them. Behind, on the wall, are curious and ancient frescoes, and on both sides between the chambers hang transparent curtains. There is a door at the centre of the back wall on which is a golden animal face with a ring in its mouth. There are also bright paintings on the doors and on the walls. (This is the south side: the pillars are red and the curtains yellow.)

On the right-hand is the right chamber, decorated as is the front, with staircases, pillars, curtains and frescoes. (This is the west side: the pillars are red and the curtains white.)

On the left-hand is the left chamber, similarly decorated. (This is the east side: the pillars are white and the curtains green.)

The court is in the front, while the structures in the centre and those on the left and right are not connected, but have corridors leading to the court in the centre.

At the back of the stage is the king's throne, of considerable height and size, with a seat on each side.

When the curtain rises Queen Cheng Hsiu is standing on the middle steps directing some maids to decorate the court. They spread a tiger-skin on the king's throne and tiger-skins on the ground before it, placing fox-skins on the left and right seats, with fox-skins on the floor before them.

There are also maids in the left and right chambers, polishing the bells, cymbals, harps and lyres.

The queen is about thirty-four or thirty-five, beautiful and nimble in movement. When the maids have finished their work she looks over it, and appears satisfied.

QUEEN. You have been quite quick. I was afraid you would not be in time, but now it is all right; everything is ready.

ONE MAID. If it please Your Majesty, shall we draw the curtains of the two chambers?

QUEEN. No, wait until the feast has started. Are all the singers and dancers ready?

ANOTHER MAID. They are all ready. The singers are waiting on the west side and the dancers on the east.

QUEEN. Very good. Let them take care not to come late or miss their orders.

BOTH MAIDS. Yes, we shall be sure to watch them carefully.

QUEEN. Let me see, I think you should divide your duties. You (*pointing to one maid*), look after the music in the hall, and the serving of wine. You (*pointing to the other maid*), look after the singing and dancing under the hall. Each of you choose some reliable people to help you. If you make everything go very smoothly today, I shall certainly reward you; but if you do it badly, then you know my temper!

BOTH MAIDS (*looking frightened and yet pleased*).

Yes, we shall certainly do our best.

QUEEN. In that case all will be well. As for the details, you don't need me to instruct you; you are both experienced. On the whole you just want to suit your actions to the occasion, and be ready at my call with everything prepared beforehand. Of course, you will have to prepare the programme which has been decided on, but you should also be ready to meet any occasion that arises outside the fixed programme. You know the king's temper well enough! Should anything go wrong, the blame will fall on your heads.

BOTH MAIDS. Yes, we know.

QUEEN. Very well then, you may go. If the knight Chin Shang comes, bring him here at once, and say that I am waiting for him.

BOTH MAIDS. Yes.

(They leave the court by the right and left-hand steps, bow and exeunt by the corridors on both sides. The queen herself descends from the court by the left-hand steps and walks about in the centre court, deep in thought. Presently a maid leads in Chin Shang from the passage on the left side. Chin Shang is a lean, middle-aged man, with hooked nose, sunken cheeks and deep-set eyes. He moves quickly and lightly.)

MAID. Your Majesty, the knight Chin Shang is here.

(The queen looks round. Chin Shang advances and bows.)

CHIN SHANG. Is Your Majesty well?

QUEEN (*inclines her head slightly. To the maid*). You may go. *(The maid assents, bows and leaves by the same passage. The queen ascends the steps of the right-*

hand chamber.) Sir Knight, what of the business I entrusted to you last night?

CHIN SHANG. If it please Your Majesty I should have come earlier to report, but as it was too late last night, and this morning I had orders to prepare for the feast at noon, I had no time to report. Also just now when the king went out of the palace I suspected that he had gone to see Chu Yuan, so I went there specially to find out; however, the king was not there, but had probably gone to the Councillor Tze Chiao.

QUEEN (*slightly annoyed*). How long-winded you are. I was asking you about your interview with Chang Yi last night.

CHIN SHANG. Yes, Your Majesty, let me tell you in detail. The reason that I went to see Chu Yuan was because I was afraid that the king might have gone there and been influenced by him again, and I feared the king might ask him to the feast today at noon, for that would make things very difficult. However, when I went there the king was not there. I have just hurried back from there, and I suppose the king must have gone to the councillor's place, in which case all will be well. For even if the king asks the councillor to come to the feast, we shall have no trouble. The councillor, that old fool, is really priceless.

QUEEN. Well, quickly, tell me straight out what I asked you. How many other digressions are you going to make?

CHIN SHANG. Yes, yes, I am just coming to the point. It is because this is extremely complicated and at the same time extremely important that we must unravel it slowly, for then it will be easy to explain. Your

Majesty, a slow artisan produces skilled work; the quicker you want to be, the slower you have to go.

QUEEN. Ah! Your words are like the slobber of a buffalo—too long!

CHIN SHANG (*rather alarmed*). Yes, yes, I am coming to the point. (*Looking round and lowering his voice.*) Last night I went to Chang Yi's place; I presented in person the presents Your Majesty gave me, and I said, "Sir, the queen asked me to send her best regards to you, together with this very humble gift, in order to help towards such expenditure as you and your retinue may incur on your journey to the land of Wei. It is very little, but I hope that you will deign to accept it."

QUEEN. There's no need to take me as Chang Yi; no need to go over all that again. What was Chang Yi's attitude?

CHIN SHANG. Chang Yi's attitude? Oh, yes, I believe when he received the presents you sent him, he was very pleased. He said, "Please go and report to the queen that I am extremely grateful, the more so since this time I come dismissed by the state of Chin, without much travelling expenses, and my followers' clothes are all worn out, presenting a very poor appearance. I am indeed most grateful for the queen's munificence. Please express my humble thanks to the queen."

QUEEN. Really, now you are taking Chang Yi's part yourself. This is too stupid. What was Chang Yi's actual reaction to my request?

CHIN SHANG. His reaction was most complex, Your Majesty, if you will just listen. I said to him, "The queen asks if you are going to the state of Wei soon." And he said, "Oh, yes." Then I said again, "The queen

heard that when you go to the state of Wei you intend to choose some beautiful girls for our king, and the queen is most grateful to you”

QUEEN. Why should I be grateful? Who told you to say that?

CHIN SHANG. Ah, Your Majesty, how is it that sometimes you are so clever—well, I had better say no more.

QUEEN. I suppose you mean that now I am stupid? I am not so stupid as you are.

CHIN SHANG. Just consider, how could I say frankly to Chang Yi that you were displeased? I still remember how you treated that last girl from the land of Wei, if you will excuse me for mentioning it again. There was a time when the king favoured the girl sent by the state of Wei, and you, instead of expressing your jealousy, went out of your way to be kind to her, so that it seemed as if you liked her better than the king. Therefore the king remained fond of you and praised you, saying that you were not in the least jealous. Then you said to that girl, “The king likes everything about you except your nose. In future when you see the king, you had better cover your nose.” And the girl took your advice. Later the king asked you, “Why must that girl cover her nose when she sees me?” You said, “She imagines that Your Majesty smells.” This caused the king to cut off the girl’s nose. That was a very clever plan!

QUEEN. Who wants your flattery? I am not so young now, and I am impatient to know Chang Yi’s reaction, and to find a way to meet it; but you are deliberately talking in circles. Are you trying to make a fool of me?

CHIN SHANG. Your Majesty, don't be so impatient. Everything is all right. That is why I am telling you in the proper order. If it were not so, I should be more impatient than you are.

QUEEN. Well, go on. What do you mean by all right? Speak up! Give me a direct answer.

CHIN SHANG. Chang Yi is a clever man. After my hint he was surprised, and he asked me, "Is that really the queen's opinion?" I said, "The queen told me so, so it probably is." He hesitated for some time, and then he told me he had not originally intended to go to the state of Wei, but as the king would not accept the proposals he brought from the state of Chin, and would not sever relations with the state of Chi, receiving in return the land conceded by the state of Chin, then he had no face to go back to the state of Chin, and had to go to the state of Wei. (*Pause.*) Thus he told me the truth. So the problem, from our point of view, is not whether he will go to the state of Wei or not, to look for a beautiful girl, but how we can make him go back to the state of Chin.

QUEEN. You are still talking too much. How is that all right? The king has taken Chu Yuan's advice and means to renew the friendly alliance with the state of Chi; he has been asking you to write the request, and he is just going to give Chang Yi a farewell feast before seeing him off to the state of Wei. Then how can you make him go back to the state of Chin?

CHIN SHANG. It is all right; our task is at noon today. I have talked it over with Chang Yi, and it is our opinion that in this short time we must discredit Chu Yuan in the eyes of the king. (*Speaking more vehemently.*) In

this matter you and I must co-operate. We are familiar with the king's nature and temperament. I have a plan in mind, but you on your side must see to it that you display all your cunning.

QUEEN (*appearing pleased*). Well, what is the plan you have in mind? You may as well let me know.

(*Walks down the steps.*)

CHIN SHANG. Your Majesty, lend me your ear.

(*The queen inclines her head toward Chin Shang, who whispers in her ear.*)

QUEEN (*shaking her head dubiously*). But this plan of yours is not absolutely reliable.

CHIN SHANG. That is why I want your help.

QUEEN. Well, to tell you the truth, I have my own plan. What concerns me is Chang Yi's attitude. Provided he is on our side and wants to go back to the state of Chin, the problem will be simple.

CHIN SHANG. Yes, Your Majesty. Won't you tell me something of your plan?

QUEEN. Better not. "Without secrecy, a plan will fail." You just wait and see. The knight Chu Yuan is coming here presently.

CHIN SHANG (*surprised*). What? Is Chu Yuan coming here?

QUEEN. Yes, I sent Tze Lan to invite him; he will certainly come.

CHIN SHANG (*dubiously*). In that case, Your Majesty, I am at a loss to understand you.

QUEEN. I don't want you to understand. To tell you the truth, the king has indeed gone to see Councillor Tze Chiao. When he went, I told him that later I would send you to invite him back. When you go to the

councillor's place, you can also take the opportunity to tell him what you wanted to tell him. As soon as Tze Lan comes back you can go. (*Suddenly cautious.*) There is somebody outside. Listen carefully. (*Whispers.*) Another thing, when you bring the king back, come in by that door. (*Pointing to the left.*) You must first tell two maids to open the door and draw the curtain, then let them go away before you enter. At all costs you must do as I say, and there must be no bungling.

(*Chin Shang nods; the two listen in silence, looking towards the corridor on the left.*)

CHU YUAN (*within*). Tze Lan, where is Her Majesty?

TZE LAN (*within*). My mother said she would be in the court. Come with me.

(*The two enter from the corridor on the left side, and seeing the queen halt.*)

TZE LAN. Mother, I have brought the knight Chu Yuan here.

QUEEN (*looking very pleased, advances towards Chu Yuan*). Ah, Sir Knight, how good of you to come. I have been waiting for you for some time.

CHU YUAN (*bows*). I hope Your Majesty is well. What does Your Majesty want of me?

QUEEN. I need your help very urgently. The king has taken your advice and will not sever relations with the state of Chi, so Chang Yi has decided to go to the state of Wei. The king is going to give him a farewell feast, and we are preparing some songs and dances as entertainment; this is where I need your advice. We shall discuss it presently in detail. (*Turning to Chin Shang.*) Sir, your main duty is outside, seeing that the cooks are well prepared. It is also possible that the king may

want to pledge the agreement, so we shall need the sacrificial vessels too.

CHIN SHANG (*bows*). Yes, I shall have everything very well prepared. I shall go first. (*Bows to the queen, nods slightly to Chu Yuan.*) Sir Chu Yuan, I went to your house just now.

CHU YUAN (*returning the bow*). I am sorry that I missed you.

CHIN SHANG. Did your Chan Chuan give you my message?

CHU YUAN. She did, thank you.

QUEEN (*to Tze Lan*). Tze Lan, you go and call the ten dancers for the performance of the "Nine Odes." Let them all be prepared.

TZE LAN. I understand, Mother.

(*Bows to the queen and exit with Chin Shang by the corridor on the right.*)

QUEEN (*to Chu Yuan*). Sir, listen to me. This boy of mine is very spoilt; his left foot is lame and his health is poor, so that whenever we relax our vigilance a little he falls sick. He has been ill for several days again, and fallen behind with his lessons with you again.

CHU YUAN. That is of no consequence. The prince is very intelligent, and provided his health is good he can learn gradually.

QUEEN. Mothers are always very ambitious for their children, on the one hand wanting them to be healthy and on the other wanting them to shine in their studies. But sometimes these two things are incompatible. So, from the ordinary point of view, I may be spoiling my son; however, we are lucky to have you as his tutor, and with such a good tutor I think he will turn out all right.

CHU YUAN. Thank you for the compliment. I treat the prince as my own younger brother, and I only want him to have good health and good spirits, so that he can be more diligent. I shall do my best to help him.

QUEEN. Thank you so much, Sir Knight. The boy is really lucky to have such a virtuous, learned and brilliant tutor. In fact even I, his mother, am grateful for such good fortune.

CHU YUAN. Thank you for your praise.

QUEEN. His father too is always saying that to have such an eminent man as you in our state must be owing to the good deeds of our ancestors.

CHU YUAN (*even more polite*). You have praised me too much, far too much.

QUEEN. Chu Yuan, you really need not be polite; for where can we find another like you, whether in the South or the North, or East or West of the Pass? Your learning is so profound, your character so lofty, and besides you have such talent and integrity that all the rulers in the world must want to have you as their subject, all the young people must want to have you as their teacher, and all the girls must want to have you as their husband.

CHU YUAN (*ill at ease*). Your Majesty, I am really rather embarrassed. May I ask Your Majesty what you would like me to do, since you asked me to come here?

QUEEN. Ah, I was carried away; you must find me too talkative. I asked you here, as I said just now, for the singing and dancing. I have ordered them to sing and dance your Odes. Those songs rewritten by you are really very beautiful. Tell me what you think of my arrangement. (*Pointing.*) In the right and left chambers of the inner hall I shall have the musical instruments

set out, and the musicians will play. The singers will appear from the right-hand chamber on the west side, and the dancers from the left-hand chamber on the east side. They will each dance separately in the middle room, making ten times in all, and then they will dance in circles in the court and sing the last song again and again, until it is fitting to close. What do you think of this plan?

CHU YUAN. It could not be better.

(While the queen and Chu Yuan are talking, Tze Lan leads the ten dancers in from the corridor on the right. All the dancers wear strange costumes and masks, somewhat like the dancers in Kokonor. The first dancer represents the Eastern Emperor, masculine, with a fierce green mask, grasping a long sword in his right hand and a goblet in his left. The second dancer represents the Lady of the Clouds, female, with a silver-grey face, star-like eyes, dressed in garments of variegated colours, holding a sun in her left hand and a moon in her right. The third represents the Princess of the Hsiang River, female, white-faced, almond-eyed, wearing a costume decorated with flowers and herbs, holding a reed-organ. The fourth represents the Lady of the Hsiang River, female, green-faced, dressed for the most part like the last dancer, but holding double pipes. The fifth represents the Great Fate, masculine, black-faced, horned and holding a bronze mirror. The sixth represents the Young Fate, female, rosy-faced and holding a broom; she is the Goddess of Love. The seventh represents the Lord of the East, God of the Sun; he is masculine and red-faced, holding bow and arrows, wearing a

blue tunic and white skirt. The eighth represents the God of the Yellow River, masculine, yellow-faced and holding a fish in his hand. The ninth represents the Spirit of the Mountain, female, blue-faced, holding a cassia bough. The tenth represents the Deceased Warrior, masculine, purple-faced, grasping a shield and spear, and clad in armour. The ten dancers walk to the hall and stand in a line before the steps, facing the audience.)

TZE LAN (*when the queen and Chu Yuan stop speaking*). Mother, I have brought the ten people.

QUEEN. Good. (*Thinking.*) I think we might as well have the singers and musicians come to their places too, and have a rehearsal. What do you think, Sir Knight?

CHU YUAN. A very good idea. I will go and tell the maids to call them.

QUEEN (*hastily stopping him*). No, you must not go. Tze Lan, you had better go. And tell the maids who have no duties not to come out. Don't you come out either.

CHU YUAN. Tze Lan walks with such difficulty....

(But before he has finished speaking Tze Lan has already hurried off, limping, down the corridor on the right.)

QUEEN. Young people should have exercise; isn't that your usual teaching? (*Looking round at the ten dancers.*) I think you had better sit down. It does not look good for you all to stand. Originally I meant you to appear from the left-hand chamber on the east side; but since you have come out, you had better sit there. (*The ten dancers sit down.*) Each individual dance should be danced in the chamber, but since there is not enough

time for that I think we had better just go through the last dance together. (*Turning to Chu Yuan.*) What do you think, Sir Knight?

CHU YUAN. That would be better, for there is really not enough time.

QUEEN. Yes, the king will be coming back soon; he has gone to see Councillor Tze Chiao. You know what he is like, he always wants to do something unexpected. Often, when you have taken great pains to prepare everything, he will suddenly call it off, and sometimes when you have not prepared anything he will suddenly want you to do something, and want it at once. I think his trouble is that he only thinks of himself and never of other people. Take today's feast, for instance; it was only mentioned yesterday evening, but when he wants a thing he must have it, and nothing else will satisfy him. Can't you imagine how troublesome it is?

CHU YUAN. Your Majesty, you have really been to great pains; but I knew nothing about it at home. I only heard it when Chin Shang came to my house; so I have not been of the least assistance, and I feel very ashamed.

QUEEN. Sir Knight, don't be so polite. I wanted at first to tell you earlier, to have the benefit of your advice; but then I thought it would be wrong to trouble you for such a trifle, because you poets, if I read you aright, like to remain as tranquil as possible. Isn't that so?

CHU YUAN. Sometimes—

(*Meaning to say "Sometimes that is so," but does not finish.*)

QUEEN. So I decided not to trouble you. Speaking of your Odes, what lively tunes those are, how delightful,

how gay and how tender! And the lines are so fragrant, so sweet, so beautiful and moving. I think after you have written such good poems you must be very happy. You make us all happy, so we ought to make you happier; that is why I decided to supervise the dance myself, so that you might know what great happiness you have given us.

CHU YUAN. Your Majesty, I am really too indebted to you. If I may presume to say a few blunt words, many of my poems are given to me by you. Your Majesty, you have so many qualities calling for our admiration, that in many ways you make us men ashamed. This is what I have always felt, and I have translated such feelings into poetry. If my poems have any good points—Your Majesty must excuse my presumption—they are all given to me by you.

QUEEN (*apparently overjoyed*). Oh, is it really so? How happy I am, how lucky I am, how grateful to you I am! Only I know very well you can't be entirely satisfied with me. I suppose you consider a person like myself not very simple, nor very innocent or quiet. Am I right?

CHU YUAN (*hesitates, at a loss how to reply*). . . .

QUEEN. Even if you do not speak, I know what you think. Only this is my nature, which I cannot help; I like splendour, I like excitement; my will to conquer is too great, and I can be very jealous. When someone endangers my happiness and safety I must fight against him, until either I sacrifice my own life or his. This, I think, is my nature. (*Pause.*) Sir Knight, I suppose you think I am too selfish?

CHU YUAN (*still at a loss for a reply*). . . .

QUEEN. You need not think of a reply, for when you don't reply I am most satisfied. Actually your nature is in many ways like mine. You do not want to play second fiddle in any society. Isn't that so? (*Pause.*) Your poems, again, are not as simple as those of other poets, for you have range and depth. You are the Tungting Lake, you are the Yangtze River, you are the Eastern Ocean. You are not a small mountain stream or an artificial lake. Tell me, have I described you accurately?

CHU YUAN (*very ill at ease*). Your Majesty, I really do not know how to reply. I have many defects, and I know them; but I am doing my best to overcome those defects.

QUEEN. Well, perhaps you may be content with solitude, but I am not. I want to blossom, I want to flourish, I want a greater place in the sun, and if the small herbs and flowers die beneath my feet, I feel no pity for them. This may be the difference between our characters. (*While they are talking all the musicians and singers have gone to their places in the different chambers, where they are visible through the curtains. Now the queen remembers the business in hand.*) Oh, I have been talking too much, and all the singers and musicians are ready. Sir Knight, I think we may as well tell them to begin the dance.

CHU YUAN. Good, let them dance "The Last Sacrifice."

QUEEN (*to the musicians and singers in the chambers*). You have heard: you are to rehearse "The Last Sacrifice." (*To the dancers.*) You may stand up. When I am standing on the stairs of the hall and wave my hand at you, the singing, music and dancing must start. When

I want you to stop, I will raise my hand again. (*To Chu Yuan.*) Sir Knight, let us go up the stairs.

(The queen ascends the western steps, while Chu Yuan ascends the eastern steps, meeting in the centre. The ten dancers come forward to the front of the stage, and stand facing inwards. The performers in the chamber are ready, looking towards the queen. The queen raises high her left hand, and makes a motion, whereupon the singing, dancing and music start together. The dancers make a circle in the court, coming together and scattering again, while the singers in the chamber sing the ode "The Last Sacrifice"):

The rites performed, the wizards strike the urn,
Pass round the sacred herbs and dance in turn;
With grace the lovely damsels dance and sing:
"Asters for autumn, orchids for the spring,
Through endless years this sacrifice we bring."

(During the singing and dancing, the back door of the left-hand chamber is opened, and two maids enter and lift the curtains on both sides, attaching them to the pillars; then, paying no attention to the music and dancing, they withdraw through the back door. The queen again raises her left hand and makes a motion, whereupon the singing, dancing and music stop simultaneously.)

QUEEN. Oh, I feel faint, I am falling. (*She pretends to fall.*) Sir Knight, Sir Knight, quickly, quickly!
(Falls into his arms.)

CHU YUAN *(taken by surprise, and seeing that there is no one else at hand, supports the queen).* . . .

(The king of Chu appears in the left-hand chamber with Chang Yi, Tze Chiao and Chin Shang. They all

see Chu Yuan holding the queen in his arms, but Chu Yuan does not see them, and he prepares to carry the queen to a seat in the chamber.)

QUEEN (*calling incessantly*). Sir Knight, Sir Knight, quickly, quickly! (*When she is sure that the king has seen them she suddenly turns about, and thrusts him away.*) Quickly let me go! You amaze me! What kind of behaviour is this? (*Runs towards the king.*)

(*Chu Yuan is dazed and does not know what to do.*)

(*The king and the others hastily descend the steps from the eastern chamber to meet the queen, who runs down the left steps and flies to the king's arms.*)

QUEEN. I am really amazed! I am really amazed!

KING. Calm yourself, don't be afraid, Cheng Hsiu.

QUEEN. Ah, luckily you came just in time, otherwise I shudder to think what might have happened! I'm afraid the knight Chu Yuan must be mad to behave so shamefully in the court.

CHU YUAN (*only just realising that he has been deceived. Angrily*). Your Majesty—what do—what do you mean?

KING (*furious*). You madman, you lunatic, I forbid you to speak! (*Chu Yuan remains angry and silent.*)

QUEEN (*slightly calmer*). Ah, I really could not have foreseen it, in the public court of all places, and when the knight is a man whose moral character I have always respected.

KING (*embracing the queen*). Calm yourself; there's no need to be alarmed, no need to be alarmed.

(*The king helps the queen up the steps, followed by the others.*)

CHU YUAN (*seeing the king approaching, bows*). Your Majesty, will you allow me to speak?

KING (*arrogantly*). I cannot allow any more madness! Ha, you have indeed amazed me. I have always considered you as a great man, but you are only like that after all! You boast openly that I am changeful and wilful; but that I could forgive you. You say that all important affairs and policies, laws and regulations of our kingdom are dictated by you; but that I could forgive you. You say that all others are flatterers and slanderers, and you alone are loyal; but that I could forgive you. But in public, before me and my guest, to behave in such an insolent manner to the queen, that I cannot forgive!

CHU YUAN (*resolutely*). Your Majesty, this is a conspiracy.

KING (*more angry*). Conspiracy? Am I conspiring against you? Is the queen conspiring against you? I can still believe the evidence of my own eyes. Had I not seen it with my own eyes just now, I should not have believed it. You are really mad, quite mad! I have taken your advice in the past, but luckily I have seen through you before it is too late. From now on, I forbid you to set foot in the palace, or ever to see me again!

CHU YUAN (*quietly and with feeling*). Your Majesty, I need never come to your palace again nor see you again. But you were not wrong before when you listened to my advice. You should think more of our people, more of the people of China. All men want to live as human beings instead of as beasts, all men oppose aggression and hate violence, and long for the time when China will be transformed from warring states into a peaceful, united country. When you took my advice about caring for the people and allying with the

kingdoms East of the Pass to resist the power of Chin, you were not wrong at all. If you pursue this policy, you will bring about the unification of China.

(The king wants to interrupt, but is stopped by the queen, who is listening cynically with Chang Yi and the others.)

CHU YUAN *(with more feeling)*. But if you let yourself be deceived by the kingdom of Chin, listening to the words of others, if you break the alliance of the six states, allowing Chin to conquer by force and massacre the people—then you will become the destroyer of our kingdom, the destroyer of China, of the people.

KING *(unable to suppress his anger)*. Arrant nonsense! . . . What . . . what . . .

QUEEN *(stopping him)*. Let him finish his raving.

CHU YUAN *(continues)*. If you let yourself be deceived by Chin, you will live to know calamity. Your palace will become the enemy's camp, your crown will be put on the head of an enemy horse, your people will be massacred until the rivers run red with blood, and both you and the queen will suffer indescribable indignities.

KING *(too angry to speak)*. What . . . what . . . what . . .

QUEEN *(sarcastically)*. Sage of our land, your frenzy has gone too far. *(Turning to Tze Chiao and Chin Shang.)* You two take him away, otherwise he may cause further trouble in the palace. He is absolutely demented. Still we don't want to punish him too severely, so you need not be too hard on him; but just take away his insignia of office.

TZE CHIAO *(bows)*. Yes, Your Majesty.

CHIN SHANG *(at the same time)*. We shall carry out Your Majesty's orders.

(The two men approach Chu Yuan and lay hands on him.)

CHU YUAN *(indignantly)*. Ah! Your Majesty, I could never have thought that you could plot against me in this way. Let heaven above, earth below and all our royal ancestors be witness—what you have plotted against is not me, but our kingdom! *(He is dragged to the western steps towards the exit on the right side, but he still calls out.)* I have done nothing to be ashamed of! I can look on death without flinching! Which of us is right and which wrong, which loyal and which treacherous, future generations will decide. What you have plotted against is not me but yourself, our king, our kingdom of Chu and all China!

(When the queen hears Chu Yuan's words, she bites her lips, hating and fearing him.)

KING. Well, he is certainly mad, he is certainly mad. *(Helping the queen to sit on the left-hand seat.)* Don't be afraid, rest a little while.

QUEEN *(pulling herself together)*. No, Your Majesty, I am not afraid of him; I am only afraid that we are being too discourteous to Sir Chang Yi.

KING *(only just remembering Chang Yi's presence)*. Oh, yes. Sir, we are too discourteous. Please sit down. *(Invites Chang Yi to sit in the right-hand seat.)*

CHANG YI *(bowing)*. Oh, it's all right, quite all right. *(Chang Yi sits down, and the king also sits on the throne in the middle.)*

CHANG YI. Please excuse my presumption, but is this lady the Queen Cheng Hsiu? *(Bowling to the queen.)*

KING *(hastily introducing them)*. Oh, yes, yes. This is my favourite Cheng Hsiu. *(To the queen.)* This is

Sir Chang Yi, Prime Minister of the state of Chin. We met in Tze Chiao's house, so I asked him to come here.

(The two bow to each other.)

CHANG YI. Today is the first time I have seen the queen.

Please excuse my presumption again; but I only now realise. . . . *(Wanting to speak, but hesitating.)*

QUEEN. Sir Chang Yi, please speak out without being too polite. I am a Southern girl, and do not understand proper etiquette.

CHANG YI *(still apologetically)*. Please excuse my presumption; but after seeing the queen today, I realise why Chu Yuan should become mad.

KING *(very pleased, laughs aloud)*. Hah, ha, ha! Very well said, very well said!

QUEEN *(smiling)*. Sir Chang Yi, you really have a ready tongue.

CHANG YI. It is true. I have been in many places, South and North, East and West of the Pass; I have travelled practically all over China under varying circumstances, rising from the rank of a poor scholar to that of prime minister of a state; I have met all kinds of people, whether nobles or knights, peasants or artisans, merchants, officers or barbarians. But, if you will excuse my presumption *(again looking apologetic)*, I really have never seen, Your Majesty, anyone so beautiful.

KING *(still more pleased)*. Ah, hah, I always said, there couldn't be another like her in the whole world.

CHANG YI. No indeed, certainly not.

KING. But yesterday you were still praising the women of China proper; didn't you say that the girls of the land

of Chou and Cheng are so beautiful that when they stand in the streets people think they are goddesses?

CHANG YI. Alas, that was owing to my ignorance, that is what is called partiality. I come from those districts, and I had only seen the women of those districts. Today, however, I have seen what real beauty is. (*Again apologising to the queen.*) Your Majesty, please excuse my presumption again, but you must be the Goddess of the Wu Mountain incarnated.

QUEEN (*smiling*). Sir Chang Yi, you really are very ready with your tongue!

KING. All right, all right; no need to praise each other any more. (*Standing up and taking Chang Yi's hand so that he rises too.*) At all events, Sir Chang Yi, I have the greatest respect for you. You say all who talk in a high-sounding way are hypocrites. That is quite true. I think you need not go to the land of Wei, and I don't want you to find me any beautiful girls; I am very pleased that you could persuade the King of Chin to show special deference to me. I shall pay no more attention to the words of that lunatic, but shall certainly sever relations with the state of Chi and ally with the state of Chin, accepting the two hundred miles of the district of Shang Yu in the kingdom of Chin.

CHANG YI. That is indeed the good fortune of both our states!

KING (*coming to the queen takes her hand to help her up*). Today you are really too tired, and as for the songs made by that lunatic, I can't bear the thought of them; so today's dance can be cancelled. (*Pauses while he reflects.*) And today's feast can be cancelled too. Let us go for a walk now outside the East Gate with Sir Chang

Yi, without taking our carriages. We will have lunch in the Temple of the Eastern Emperor, that should be quite interesting. (*Turning to Chang Yi.*) Well, Sir Chang Yi, let us go. As for these lunacies, let the others take care of them.

(He points to the dancers in the court who have not yet received orders to leave, but are sitting or standing in small groups, scattered about. The Eastern Emperor and the Lord of the Clouds are sitting on the steps of the eastern chamber, the Spirit of the Mountain beside them. The Great Fate and the Young Fate are sitting on the steps of the western chamber, with the Deceased Warrior standing beside them. The Lord of the East and the God of the Yellow River stand leaning against the pillar by the eastern chamber; the Lady of the Hsiang River and the Princess of the Hsiang River stand leaning against the pillar of the western chamber.)

(The king, queen and Chang Yi walk to the steps.)

(Tze Chiao and Chin Shang appear on the right-hand side and bow to the king beneath the steps.)

TZE CHIAO. Your Majesty, we have taken away Chu Yuan's insignia of office, and let him go.

CHIN SHANG. We should also add that when he went out he was shouting incessantly; and before he left, in front of everybody, he tore his robe to shreds.

KING (*furious again*). What a lunatic! Have all this ridiculous show removed!

CURTAIN

ACT III

TIME: A little after noon.

SCENE: The same as for the First Act.

Sung Yu is sweeping the garden. After sweeping he puts the broom by the steps of the pavilion, leans against an orange tree, takes out the "Ode to the Orange" from his coat, and reads aloud:

Here the orange tree is found
Shedding beauty all around,
Living in this southern grove
From its fate it will not move;
For as its roots lie fast and deep
So its purpose it will keep.
With green leaves and blossoms white,
It brings beauty and delight.

When he reaches this point he recites it to himself with closed eyes, but when he comes to the line "So its purpose it will keep," he cannot remember and has to look at the manuscript, after which he closes his eyes and recites to himself. After reciting it aloud once again, he opens his eyes and reads it through again, going further this time:

Yet foliage and sharp thorns abound,
To guard the fruit so ripe and round.

Golden clusters, clusters green,
Glimmer with a lovely sheen,
While all within is pure and clear,
Like heart of a philosopher.
Grace and splendour here are one,
Beauty all and blemish none.

Again he closes his eyes and recites to himself, but when he reaches the line "While all within is pure and clear," he forgets again, looks at the poem, reads it with his head a little to one side, and recites. Then he starts from the beginning again, and although sometimes he hesitates in the middle he succeeds in remembering it all. Then he reads the second half again:

Your youthful and impetuous heart
Sets you from common men apart,
And well-contented I to see
Your resolute integrity.
Deep-rooted thus you stand unshaken,
Impartial, by no fancies taken;
Steadfast you choose your course alone,
Following no fashion but your own.

When he reaches this point he closes his eyes and recites again, but now Tze Lan enters stealthily from the back gate and walks quietly to his side without Sung Yu realising it. Tze Lan scratches Sung Yu's left leg, barking like a dog, making Sung Yu start.

SUNG YU. Ah, you gave me quite a start.

TZE LAN (laughs aloud). Ha, ha, ha!

SUNG YU. Why are you here again? Where is the master?

TZE LAN. The master is in the palace discussing the dancing of the "Nine Odes" with my mother. The deities

in those dances are really very amusing; in fact I wanted to watch, but Mother wouldn't let me. It's very strange today—usually when there are dances she always lets me watch, but today she wouldn't even let me see the rehearsal. So I took the opportunity to come here.

SUNG YU. Are you afraid of your mother?

TZE LAN. Ha! Not only I but even my father is afraid of her. I don't think there is a single person in the palace who isn't afraid of her. Even the knight Chin Shang, who is on good terms with her, is afraid of her, so that in her presence he can only answer "Yes" to everything.

SUNG YU. It seems to me that our master is not afraid of her.

TZE LAN. Quite right, master doesn't seem to be afraid of her. Evidently anyone who can make others fear him is not afraid of anyone himself. The only other person I am afraid of, apart from my mother, is the master.

SUNG YU. Only the master is dignified without being fierce, whereas I am afraid that the queen is fierce without being dignified.

TZE LAN. Indeed, so you have the courage to criticise my mother?

SUNG YU (*bowing in apology*). I spoke too hastily. My fault, my fault.

TZE LAN. It doesn't matter if you talk like that before me; but you should be more careful if you want to keep your head. What are you reading?

SUNG YU (*showing him the "Ode to the Orange"*). A poem which the master wrote this morning.

TZE LAN (*glances at it quickly and returns it*). Humph, an "Ode to the Orange." Why not an "Ode to the Orchid"? In that case it would be to my credit.

SUNG YU. In master's poems he often refers to the orchid. I think you have already had plenty of credit.

TZE LAN. It's true that the master is rather fond of orchids; the only pity is that he is not too fond of me. He always says that I won't study hard and makes jokes about me saying that I will turn into a weed, until I feel quite embarrassed. Sometimes I even want to change my name.

SUNG YU. It's a fact that you don't study hard, but I don't see that you have any need to. You are a prince, so that whatever happens you can't become a weed.

TZE LAN. Quite right, the orchid is a kingly plant; it may even be that I shall become King of Chu.

SUNG YU. It's a pity your elder brother is the Crown Prince and that he is still in the state of Chin, instead of dead.

TZE LAN. How can you guarantee that he will not die early? Besides, my father likes my mother and my mother likes me. Provided that my mother wants me to be king, do you think it is impossible?

SUNG YU (*in jest rolls up the scroll, holds it in both hands and salutes Tze Lan*). May it please Your Majesty, your servant Sung Yu comes to render homage.

TZE LAN (*acknowledging the courtesy with delight*). Good. In future when I become king I shall certainly make you prime minister, and if you show yourself incapable of being prime minister I shall at least make you secretary of state, like master now, so that you can look after compositions.

SUNG YU. Not bad. I should rather like that. I have great confidence in the field of writing. Strictly speaking there are even some of the master's compositions that I don't think much of. Take this "Ode to the Orange" for instance. It is written in the old manner, and the style is redundant, piling up epithets unnecessarily. But the master is like that, only because he is famous, no matter what he writes people will say it is good. If I had written this "Ode to the Orange," people would think it childish.

TZE LAN. I don't entirely agree with you. I feel that of his poems this "Ode to the Orange" is comparatively elegant. In most of his poems he uses popular language, which I don't like. The knights Chin Shang and Tze Chiao don't care for those poems either. They consider them too crude and vulgar. If you become my secretary of state, you mustn't write like that. (*Thinking of something else.*) But really, where is Chan Chuan? How is it she is nowhere to be seen?

SUNG YU. She is working in front. Did you come specially to look for her?

TZE LAN. If I did I suppose you would be displeased, wouldn't you?

SUNG YU. Why should I be displeased? Don't go imagining things about people like that. Do you suppose I like such common girls? I am not of your class. You princes and nobles always like to take advantage of country girls to gain experience; but we sons of poor families, to tell you the truth, prefer to aspire higher. The more difficult a thing is to get, the more we prize it.

TZE LAN. Hah! I never knew that was your idea. Then I suppose you don't love Chan Chuan?

SUNG YU. I wouldn't say I dislike her particularly, but what would be the use of loving her? Anyone so prim and proper couldn't help me at all, to say nothing of the fact that she is a maidservant, and if I took her as my wife it would be a hindrance to my career.

TZE LAN. Well, well, so you are more ambitious than I am. That purity of yours is just a pose! Well, we shall be good friends from now on. In future, suppose we share our good luck and our bad luck. Would you like that?

SUNG YU. Of course I should like it. Just as the master is of great use to your father now, I shall be of considerable service to you too in future. Especially regarding writing I am very confident.

(Chu Yuan appears with dishevelled hair and ordinary gown, beside himself with anger, from the outer gate. At this sight Sung Yu and Tze Lan are amazed and go to meet him.)

SUNG YU. Master, what has happened to you?

TZE LAN *(simultaneously).* Has anything happened, Master?

CHU YUAN *(ignoring them as he walks to the steps and halts).* Ah! I never could have imagined that you would plot against me like that! But what you are plotting against is not me, but the whole of China! *(The two boys approach Chu Yuan timidly to question him.)* Do not come near me! I cannot contain myself.

(Walks quickly up the steps and sits down despondently by the balustrade, clasping his head in his hands and grasping his dishevelled hair. After sitting for a while he beats his knees with his fists, and rising in anger strides to and fro in the pavilion. The two

pupils dare not approach him, but stand at the foot of the steps, looking at each other, not knowing what to do.)

CHU YUAN. I have done nothing to be ashamed of! I can look on death without flinching. Which of us is right and which wrong, which loyal and which treacherous, will be judged by future generations. What you have plotted against is not me but our kingdom, all China!

(By this time there are people peering in from outside the fence, who dare not enter the garden. When Chu Yuan notices them, he walks down the steps hastily, and goes to the inner gate.)

SUNG YU *(timidly)*. Master, can I help you?

CHU YUAN. No, I don't want to see anybody. People make me afraid!

(Exit in fury. The two pupils look bewildered. Of the spectators outside the garden some show pity, some surprise, and some amusement.)

SUNG YU. What can have happened?

TZE LAN. It looks as if master has lost his mind.

SUNG YU. How is it nobody came back with him?

TZE LAN. Strange, very strange!

SUNG YU. I think you had better run back to the palace and find out what happened.

TZE LAN. Right. I was thinking so myself. When I was in the palace I saw him and Mother talking very cordially. Could he have met a mad dog on the way back?

SUNG YU. Even if he did, it would not take effect so quickly. Anyway the best thing is for you to go back and ask.

(The crowd makes way by the gate for the knight Chin Shang to enter. Sung Yu and Tze Lan greet him.)

CHIN SHANG *(speaking as he enters)*. So, Prince Tze Lan, you are here too. Has your master returned?

SUNG YU. Yes, just now. He says he doesn't want to see anyone, or he won't be able to control himself.

CHIN SHANG. Well, this is most unexpected.

SUNG YU and TZE LAN *(simultaneously)*. What has happened?

CHIN SHANG. This is certainly unexpected. Nobody could believe it without seeing it with his own eyes.

SUNG YU and TZE LAN. Well, what is it?

CHIN SHANG. Do you want to know? I will tell you. Tze Lan, come here. I will tell you first.

(Whispers in his ear.)

TZE LAN. Hah! Could master do such a thing?

CHIN SHANG. I said just now that nobody who didn't see it himself could have believed it.

(Walks up the steps, deliberately chooses a place facing the crowd, and sits down.)

TZE LAN *(following him up the steps)*. Well, how exactly did it happen?

CHIN SHANG. I will tell you slowly. Don't be impatient.

SUNG YU *(at the foot of the steps, starts driving the crowd away)*. You people have no business here. Please go away. There is nothing here to stare at.

CHIN SHANG *(stopping him)*. Let them stay. After all, this business has spread all over the capital, and they are bound to know it sooner or later. Let me, as an eye-witness, tell them so that they will not be wrongly informed. Better let them enter the garden.

(Hearing this the people rush into the garden, and Sung Yu cannot stop them, so he goes to the inner gate and closes it.)

CROWD. What happened to the knight Chu Yuan?
Please tell us.

CHIN SHANG *(stands up and walks to the steps).*
Neighbours and elders, you all know the knight to be a man of high moral character.

CROWD. Very true, he is the sage of the South.

CHIN SHANG. And you also know that he is a great writer.

CROWD. Yes, we know. He is the greatest writer in all Chu.

CHIN SHANG. He has revised the odes for sacrifice to the deities, you know that, do you?

CROWD. Yes, we can all sing his new songs.

(Then sing odd lines):

The bright sun rises from the Orient...

Proudly as kings among the ghosts shall reign

....

Guarding the young you grasp your gleaming sword....

CHIN SHANG. All right. Now I will tell you what happened to the knight.

CROWD. Good. We want very much to hear.

CHIN SHANG. Today at noon the king wanted to give a parting feast to Chang Yi, the Prime Minister of Chin, and our queen herself undertook to rehearse the odes, revised by the knight, to entertain Chang Yi.

SOME OF THE CROWD. Our queen is very capable.

CHIN SHANG. The queen asked the knight to direct the rehearsal, sending Prince Tze Lan here to invite him.

SOME OF THE CROWD. What happened then?

CHIN SHANG. When the queen and the knight were directing the rehearsal I was sent to Councillor Tze Chiao's house to invite the king back, for the king had gone there to discuss matters with the Councillor. I went to the Councillor's home and met Chang Yi there. Then the king asked Chang Yi, the Councillor and myself to go to the palace.

CROWD. What happened then?

CHIN SHANG. Ah, it was most unexpected. When we went back to the palace "The Last Sacrifice" had just been performed and the strangest thing had happened to the knight. What do you think had happened?

CROWD. How can we guess?—This is impossible.—How can we tell?

OLD MAN. Had he lost his mind through too great happiness?

CROWD. No, Sir Chu Yuan could not do that.... He is not that type of man.... Old gentleman, you are insulting the knight....

CHIN SHANG. More or less correct; but you did not guess the reason. No one who did not see for himself could guess, and even if I tell you, probably none of you will quite believe me.

CROWD. Well, what did happen?

CHIN SHANG (slowly). Well, when we went with the king to the palace, the dance of "The Last Sacrifice" had just been performed. The king went in first, Chang Yi second, Tze Chiao third and myself last, and we saw

with our own eyes the knight standing on the steps of the inner chamber, holding the queen closely in his arms, wanting to kiss her.

CROWD (*in an uproar*). What! How could the knight do such a thing? We don't believe it No one will believe it You are insulting the knight

CHIN SHANG. I said before, if I had not seen it, I could not have believed it. The knight is a man of such moral character, and the palace is such a sacred place, and the queen is so highly respected by us—how could such a thing come about? (*Sees Tze Chiao coming to the outer gate.*) Now the Councillor is here; he is another witness. Quickly make way for him.

(The people turn round and at the same time make way for the Councillor. However the crowd is still in an uproar murmuring indignantly. Tze Chiao enters; Sung Yu welcomes him from the inner gate.)

TZE CHIAO. Well, has the knight not come back?

SUNG YU. If it please Your Excellency, master has come back, but he is distraught, and says he does not want to see anybody. He is probably resting now in front.

TZE CHIAO (*seeing Chin Shang and Tze Lan*). So you two are here already? Have you seen the knight?

(Walks up the steps followed by Sung Yu.)

TZE LAN. I have seen master. He had taken off his outer garment, and lost his hat, and he seemed beside himself with anger, just saying that he could not contain himself. He also said that people had plotted against him, but it was not he that was injured, but our country.

TZE CHIAO. I think his case is a very serious one. (*To Chin Shang.*) You have not seen him?

CHIN SHANG. I was very worried, so I hurried here, but failed to see him.

TZE CHIAO (to Sung Yu). I think you had better get a witch doctor to call back his spirit. He has lost his reason.

SUNG YU. Is it true that master was behaving improperly toward the queen?

TZE CHIAO. Do you think that we could make it up? I and Chin Shang saw it with our own eyes, and the king and Chang Yi too. Luckily we went back early and saw him embracing the queen and trying to kiss her, while she was struggling with him and calling to him: "Let me go!—Let me go!" He must have seen the king, for he let the queen go without having kissed her. It was a good thing we went there early, for if we had been a moment later, not only would the knight have lost his office, but he might even have lost his life. Just think, even if the king had wanted to forgive him on account of his being a member of the royal clan, how could the queen forgive him? Anyway, he did not succeed in his crime, which is the only fortunate aspect of this unfortunate business.

SUNG YU (sighs). Well, I could never have thought our master could act like that.

TZE CHIAO. Actually I advised him long ago on this. His wife has been dead for more than two years, and I advised him some time ago to marry again; but he always delayed. Consider for yourselves, a bachelor nearing forty, and in springtime when all the flowers are in blossom—of course there would be trouble. I came in order to see him; because although he has lost his office we were after all old colleagues. But since

he doesn't want to see anybody I had better not disturb him. (*To Sung Yu.*) Sung Yu, you are a clever lad. You had better take my advice and set about calling back his spirit for him. If we can succeed in restoring his reason I shall be doing my duty as an old colleague, and you will be doing your duty as a pupil.

OLD MAN. Yes, and we shall be doing our duty as neighbours. (*To the crowd.*) Now neighbours, a couple of you had better go quickly to prepare a straw man. (*Two or three of the crowd assent, and go off. The rest still shake their heads and express doubt. To Sung Yu.*) Master Sung Yu, you had better fetch one of your master's gowns.

SUNG YU (*hesitating*)

TZE CHIAO. Sung Yu, you do as he says. You're your master's favourite pupil, so you ought to do this for him.

SUNG YU. It's only that I'm afraid if the master finds out, he will be angry.

TZE CHIAO. You tell Chan Chuan privately to give you the clothes, without asking him.

SUNG YU. In order to do my duty I shall do as you say.

TZE CHIAO. That's very good. I can't stay here long; I must hurry back.

CHIN SHANG. I shall go with you, Councillor. (*Turning to Tze Lan.*) How about you?

TZE LAN. I shall stay here to watch the calling of the spirit. I want to do my part too.

TZE CHIAO. Very good, very good. You are also his pupil, so this is what you should do. If the queen comes back I shall tell her of it. Good. Neighbours and elders, we shall leave this matter in your hands.

CROWD. We shall do our best. Please don't worry.

CHIN SHANG. Good, we shall go now.

(Tze Chiao walks in front, Chin Shang following. They speak as they walk, descending from the pavilion and going towards the gate.)

TZE CHIAO. Alas, human nature is entirely unpredictable. When a man is too obstinate he is looking for trouble.

CHIN SHANG. Still, although you advised the knight to marry again, it was not such an easy matter. He has a very high standard, and nothing short of a goddess appearing from the sky would satisfy him.

TZE CHIAO. That is the whole root of the trouble. These literary people always let their imaginations run away with them, until sooner or later they get themselves into trouble. How unfortunate!

CHIN SHANG. Quite true. "There is beauty in the ugliest woman, and ugliness in the greatest beauty." Only those who can never be satisfied simply ruin themselves. *(They pass off stage.)*

OLD MAN *(waiting until they are gone)*. Master Sung Yu, please go quickly and fetch your master's clothing.

SUNG YU *(to Tze Lan)*. Prince Tze Lan, will you please look after the inner gate for me.

(Walks towards the inner gate.)

TZE LAN. All right. I hope you will ask Chan Chuan to come out too.

SUNG YU. I can ask her for you, but whether she will come or not I can't guarantee. I think you had better ask the old gentleman to call your spirit back too.

TZE LAN. You sarcastic devil. I know you are pleased that master is mad. Now no one can surpass you; isn't that right?

SUNG YU. Ha, you really are clever. (Exit.)

OLD MAN (*shakes his head*). Well, young people nowadays have no real feeling. Ah, the straw man is here. You have been very quick.

(*People come in with the straw figure, running from the back gate. They give the straw figure to the old man.*)

ONE OF THE CROWD. We worked together, so we got it done very quickly.

OLD MAN. Now we are in a hurry, so the quicker the better. (*Takes the straw figure to the pavilion. Stands by the corridor, turning toward the crowd.*) Come and perform the ritual. Form a circle, and when I start the ritual, you sing "The Last Sacrifice," dancing at the same time.

(*The people make a circle but some still look incredulous. Enter Sung Yu, holding some white garments, and Chan Chuan, carrying the brown dog, from the inner gate. The old man comes down the steps, takes the white garments and goes back to the pavilion.*)

OLD MAN. We need the blood of someone dear to him to put on the straw figure, and it must be that of a virgin. Since the knight has no kin here I think Mistress Chan Chuan's blood will serve. Mistress Chan Chuan, please come over to pierce your finger and drop a little blood on the head of the straw figure.

CROWD (*seeing Chan Chuan hesitate*). Haven't you got this little feeling for your master? We are all doing what we can.

(*Chan Chuan gives the dog to Sung Yu and runs to the pavilion.*)

OLD MAN (*chants to the people*). Now the ritual starts.

First, please sing "The Last Sacrifice."

(He puts the garment on the straw figure and bows to it. The crowd sings three times, then stops and halts under the pavilion.)

(The crowd sings):

The rites performed, the wizards strike the urn,
Pass round the sacred herbs, and dance in turn;
With grace the lovely damsels dance and sing:
"Asters for autumn, orchids for the spring,
Through endless years this sacrifice we bring."

OLD MAN (*chanting*). "The Last Sacrifice" is over. Now for the blood sacrifice.

(He leads Chan Chuan over, pierces the middle finger of her right hand with a small knife, and drops a little blood on the head of the straw figure. He signs to Chan Chuan to leave the pavilion, and she walks down and goes to Sung Yu, who gives her back the brown dog.)

OLD MAN (*waving the garments in the air*). Eastern Emperor, great and illustrious, Old and Young Fates, Lord of the Clouds, I summon you to the sacrifice. The knight Chu Yuan's spirit has left his body, and his neighbours and friends are calling it to return. We pray you gods to have pity, and send back his spirit to his native place.

(After this prayer he folds the garment about the straw figure, bows to it again, waves it towards the East, and chants):

Oh Knight, return! (*Crowd joins in.*)
Eastward thou must not go!

For in the east ten suns thou mayst behold,
Their heat devouring stone with bronze and gold.
There devils dwell, a thousand cubits tall,
Who e'er upon the wandering spirit fall.

(Waving towards the South.)

Oh Knight, return! *(Crowd joins in.)*
Southward thou must not go!
There live the Blackteeth and the Gaudybrows
Who murder strangers to fulfill their vows;
Men's flesh they sacrifice, their bones they grind;
There cobras move like grass beneath the wind.
There foxes huge a thousand miles hold sway,
And serpents with nine heads which dart and
play.

(Waving towards the West.)

Oh Knight, return! *(Crowd joins in.)*
Westward thou must not go!
Westward the desert stretches far away,
Whose stinging sands thy tender flesh will flay,
Red ants as huge as elephants are there,
And black wasps huge as gourds your flesh will
tear.

(Waving towards the North.)

Oh Knight, return! *(Crowd joins in.)*
Northward thou must not go!
There icebergs tower as great mountains high,
A thousand miles the sharp snows stinging fly.
There grows no grass, no trees wilt thou behold;
Mortals are frozen in that bitter cold.

*(Stands in the middle of the pavilion and waves
towards heaven.)*

Oh Knight, return! (*Crowd joins in.*)
To heaven thou must not go!
Tigers and leopards guard the nine great gates,
To slay each mortal rash who penetrates.
Strange giants with nine heads inhabit there,
With packs of wolves that mortals' flesh will tear;
With horrid stealth their watch for men they keep,
To hurl them over precipices steep.
Until the High King issues his decree,
The soul knows nothing of security.

(Walking to the steps and waving the figure towards the ground.)

Oh Knight, return! (*Crowd joins in.*)
To hell thou must not go!
The keeper of the hell has nine tails long,
And on his head the horns are sharp and strong;
Beneath a tiger's brow his three eyes flame,
And mighty as a bull's his monstrous frame,
With crooked back and hands with blood defiled,
He feeds on mortals in his frenzy wild.

(Circling round in the pavilion.)

Oh Knight, return! (*Crowd joins in.*)

Return, O Soul, back to your native place! Here is your orange grove, here your pavilion, your neighbours, Chan Chuan, Tze Lan, Sung Yu and your small brown dog.

(Circling faster and faster.)

Oh Knight, return! . . .

(Chu Yuan suddenly comes out of the inner gate, wearing a long black gown and with dishevelled hair. Since the crowd with Sung Yu and Tze Lan are

whirling around and chanting, and Chan Chuan is watching them, no one notices his arrival.)

CHU YUAN (*angrily*). What are you doing here?

(Sung Yu, Chan Chuan, Tze Lan and the crowd are frightened, and fall back. Sung Yu walks hastily to the pavilion.)

OLD MAN (*coming down from the pavilion and bowing to Chu Yuan*). Sir Knight, we are calling back your spirit.

CHU YUAN. Who wants you to call back my spirit, you people without faith! You listen to the devil's words. You call the phoenix a cock, you call the unicorn a lamb, you call the dragon a worm, you call the sacred tortoise a turtle. Who wants you to call back my spirit, you people without faith! You listen to the devil's words, and call the orchid a weed, the chrysanthemum poison; jade you call coal, beauty you call ugliness. You people without faith, who wants you to call spirits!

(He snatches the straw figure from the old man.)

OLD MAN (*frightened, runs away*). This is a madman, a madman! He wants to beat me!

(The crowd rushes out through the back gate, but some look back, looking sympathetic or incredulous.)

CHU YUAN (*angrily watches the retreating crowd, then dashes the straw figure to the ground*). So, you tried to injure me, you tried to injure me; but it is not me you are injuring but our kingdom.

(Clutching his head he turns round and quickly disappears through the inner gate. Sung Yu and Tze Lan stand watching in silence for a while; then Sung Yu picks up the straw figure, walks up the pavilion and leans against the balustrade deep in thought.)

TZE LAN. Ah, I really am amazed. I dare not stay here any longer, and I don't ever want to come here again.

How about you, Chan Chuan?

CHAN CHUAN. How about me?

TZE LAN. Aren't you afraid of the madman?

CHAN CHUAN. You are the madman, I don't believe what you say.

TZE LAN. You mean to say you don't believe the evidence of your own eyes?

CHAN CHUAN. If I say I don't believe, then I don't. Didn't the master say people had tried to injure him? But I didn't dare to ask what really happened.

TZE LAN. Just now Councillor Tze Chiao and the knight Chin Shang were here; it's a pity you didn't hear what they said.

CHAN CHUAN. What did they say?

TZE LAN. They actually came to see the master, but since the master would not see them, they said a few words to us and left.

CHAN CHUAN. Well, what did they say?

TZE LAN. They said they saw with their own eyes master holding my mother in the palace, trying to kiss her.

CHAN CHUAN. Nonsense! I don't believe a word of it.

TZE LAN. Nonsense is it? But if you know the details, you will have to believe it. This morning you know I came to invite master to the palace, because Mother wanted him to help with the dancing to entertain Chang Yi. Mother and master were having a rehearsal in the palace, and Father had gone to the Councillor's place. It was nearly time for the feast, so Mother asked the knight Chin Shang to invite Father back. Chang Yi was also in the Councillor's place, so Father, Chang Yi,

the Councillor and the knight Chin Shang went back to the palace together. And no sooner had they entered the palace than they saw the master like this (*trying to embrace Chan Chuan who retreats*), holding Mother, while Mother was struggling hard. What a scandalous business! But when master saw Father he let Mother go, and Father in anger dismissed him. Tze Chiao said that they got back just in the nick of time, for if they had been a little later, not only would master have been deprived of his rank, but he would have suffered more.

CHAN CHUAN. Did they really say so?

TZE LAN. Who wants to cheat you? You go and ask Sung Yu. Excuse me, but there are some important things I must pack up. (*Exit through the inner gate.*)

CHAN CHUAN (*walks to the pavilion*). Did they really say that?

SUNG YU. Of course they did. And they came at different times, and spoke at different times, but they said exactly the same thing.

CHAN CHUAN. Do you believe it?

SUNG YU. I haven't made up my mind yet; but it seems that we have to believe it whether we want to or not. The master has lost his wife for more than two years, and it is springtime.

CHAN CHUAN. So you want to insult master too? I always knew you were not dependable.

SUNG YU. Scold me if you like. Actually I wish I could disbelieve it, but if you say you don't believe it, what proof have you?

CHAN CHUAN. I did not see it with my own eyes, and whatever you say I will not believe it. As for proof, I am the proof myself. You think, I wait on master

morning and evening, and master always treats me just as his own daughter, without a trace of improper behaviour. Isn't that a very good proof?

SUNG YU. Well, well, Mistress Chan Chuan, you evidently have quite a high opinion of your own charms.

CHAN CHUAN. What? If you talk like that you really are a traitor to master!

SUNG YU. Very sorry, but I really can't help it. I feel I can't stay here any more. It is a pity master has taught me so long, but anyway I have learned master's good points. Chan Chuan, come over here, I want to give you something.

CHAN CHUAN. What do I want from you?

SUNG YU. It's something master wrote.

CHAN CHUAN (*running up the pavilion*). Something of master's?

SUNG YU (*taking the poem out of his pocket*). It's a new poem that master wrote this morning.

(*Gives it to Chan Chuan.*)

CHAN CHUAN (*unrolls the scroll and looks pleased*).

Ah, an "Ode to the Orange." It praises the orange, which is one of the things I like most.

SUNG YU. This morning in this pavilion master gave me this poem, and at the same time gave me a very long lecture.

CHAN CHUAN. Tell me that too.

SUNG YU. It was too long, I can't remember it. At the time I thought it rather good, but now I feel differently. I can only remember the general idea: the master wanted me to take the orange as my teacher, saying the orange tree is not cowardly, or slothful, but unbending, just amplifying the theme of the poem.

CHAN CHUAN. What else did he say?

SUNG YU. He also said that the times are ones of great stress and strain, and he wanted me to take as my model that Po Yi who starved himself to death on Shou Yang Mountain, saying that character is paramount, and that in this momentous period of history we should live heroically and die heroically.

CHAN CHUAN. How well said!

SUNG YU. Yes, when I heard it this morning I was quite moved. But now I feel it's easy to talk like that, but very difficult to act like that.

CHAN CHUAN. You mean the master talks in one way and behaves in another?

SUNG YU. I was only expressing my own feeling—no need for you to drag the master into it. The master also told me something of the greatest value to me.

CHAN CHUAN. What about?

SUNG YU. About his experience in writing poetry. The master said he was trying to learn from the people and from children, and he told me not to consider my master too highly nor myself too lightly.

CHAN CHUAN. Hum, I suppose you already consider yourself superior to master?

SUNG YU. Why talk like that, Chan Chuan? It is very valuable advice about learning from the people. To tell you the truth, just now when I watched that old man calling back master's spirit, I got an excellent subject for a poem. In a couple of days I shall write it out, and I shall call it "Requiem." I think it will be a masterpiece, not inferior to master's Odes.

CHAN CHUAN. Congratulations. I hope it is not your own spirit you are calling back.

SUNG YU. If you want to be sarcastic, all right. (*Going down the steps.*) Anyway I can't stay here any more.

(*Tze Lan, carrying some old scrolls, enters from the inner gate followed by Chu Yuan's old servant Ah Wang and the kitchen-maid Ah Huang, with their baggage.*)

CHAN CHUAN (*calling from the pavilion*). Ah Wang! Ah Huang! Where are you going?

AH WANG. Sorry, but we can't stay here any more.

AH HUANG. I am frightened, Mistress Chan Chuan.

CHAN CHUAN. Where do you mean to go?

AH HUANG. Prince Tze Lan has taken pity on us.

AH WANG. He is going to take us to the palace.

SUNG YU (*descending the steps and confronting Tze Lan*). Prince Tze Lan, please take me to the palace too.

TZE LAN. That's easy. My mother likes you too, and will certainly be pleased to have you.

SUNG YU. Apart from the dog here, I shan't take any of my things.

TZE LAN. Why should you take anything? Are you afraid there won't be enough things in the palace for you? These things (*showing him the scrolls*), do you know, are the old chronicles of our kingdom, brought from the palace. They are too precious to leave here. Actually I didn't want Ah Wang and Ah Huang to bring their things, but they insisted on doing so, so I let them.

SUNG YU. Let me carry some of the chronicles.

TZE LAN. Very good. (*Gives him half.*)

(*Chan Chuan stands by herself in the pavilion with clenched teeth, feeling hurt, disgusted and angry. All these emotions are expressed on her face.*)

TZE LAN (coming to the steps and speaking seriously).

Mistress Chan Chuan, I am saying good-bye to you; but before I go, I want to say a few words. Will you let me?

(Chan Chuan remains unmoved, silent.)

TZE LAN. This morning I asked you at the pavilion, "Whom do you like?" And you replied that you liked the one you liked. Now I have got it very clear. You don't like me, the lame prince; you prefer the madman who has lost his mind!

CHAN CHUAN (angry and tearful). You people without faith!

TZE LAN. No need to fly into a temper. Let me tell you something which will make you lose faith too. The master has disappeared.

CHAN CHUAN (greatly alarmed). What?

AH WANG. Yes, just now the master rushed out of the front gate!

AH HUANG. When the master left the garden, he put on a tall hat and long sword and ran out.

CHAN CHUAN. Where did master go? Didn't he tell you?

AH HUANG. He was very angry, and did not say anything.

AH WANG. And no one dared ask him.

SUNG YU (on first hearing of Chu Yuan's disappearance he was taken by surprise, but then he calmed himself, and now speaks very calmly). I think this time the master has gone out either to kill someone or to kill himself.

CHAN CHUAN. Sung Yu! Don't leave the master! Go and find him quickly! Go quickly, please!

SUNG YU (*hesitates*). What's the use? The master is mad. If he's not dead, it's worse than death. What do we want a madman in our country for? Besides, I have decided to follow Prince Tze Lan to the palace, I wash my hands of him.

CHAN CHUAN. Heartless! How can you think so poorly of the master? How could he be mad? Those who have invited you are the real madmen, with no souls. Our master is the pillar of our state, the foundation stone of our society. Can you understand what it means to our kingdom to lose him? I am a daughter of the people, our master's maid. All my work is to clean the hall and courtyard and keep things in order; I cannot make poetry and discuss politics like you; but I know that the security of our state depends on our master. He is the soul of our land, and if he dies our country will perish Won't any of you go to look for him? (*They remain silent.*) How can you be so heartless? (*They remain silent.*) Ah, Master, your Chan Chuan will not abandon you! If you die then Chan Chuan will die with you!

(*She runs down from the pavilion and out from the inner gate.*)

THE REST. Let us go quickly. There is another lunatic!
(*They run to the outer gate.*)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE: Outside the East Gate of the capital of Chu. On the right-hand side rise the city walls, with a gate on which is written "Dragon Gate." A small stream serves as moat, and above the moat is a bank planted with willows. The water passes the stage and turns to the left; a bridge is visible on the left side approximately opposite the city wall, but its further end is out of sight.

Upon the bank on the right is a middle-aged man, looking like a hermit, who is fishing under the willow trees. Another old man by the bridge is watching a fishing net, which he lifts from time to time out of the water, and then lets drop again.

The fisherman sings:

Peasants to the land are tied,
With muddy legs the fields they till;
Crops they reap with blood and sweat
Go their master's barns to fill.

Princes in the palace sleep,
With damsels fair as paradise;
To their slumbers come not nigh,
Foul mosquitoes, fleas or lice.

God stays high above the clouds,
Drunken angels round him lie;
Though the world is full of woe,
They turn a blind, indifferent eye.

The sun is sinking in the west and the clouds in the sky changing colour, when Chan Chuan runs hurriedly out of the city gate and looks about her. She meets an old woman coming across the bridge, about to enter the city.

CHAN CHUAN. Mother, have you seen our master on the road beyond the bridge?

OLD WOMAN. Who is your master?

CHAN CHUAN. The knight Chu Yuan.

OLD WOMAN. Oh, the government says he is mad but people do not believe it; I haven't seen him.

(Enters the city.)

CHAN CHUAN *(stands by the roadside in doubt, then runs to the end of the bridge and questions the old man)*.

Uncle, have you seen the knight Chu Yuan?

OLD MAN. No, I haven't. They say he is mad, but I don't know what has happened to him.

FISHERMAN *(to the old man)*. You all say the knight is mad, but that is a great injustice!

OLD MAN. Sir, I only heard passers-by say that; I don't know what happened.

FISHERMAN. They all say that the knight is mad, that he behaved scandalously at court. Well, only heaven knows.

CHAN CHUAN *(approaching the fisherman)*. Sir, do you know what actually happened?

FISHERMAN. I saw it with my own eyes, Mistress.

CHAN CHUAN. Could you tell me?

FISHERMAN (*looking at her searchingly*). Young woman, who are you in the knight's household?

CHAN CHUAN. I am Chan Chuan, the master's maid.

FISHERMAN. Oh yes, your name comes in the Odes. In the "Ode to the Lady of the Hsiang River," I remember such a line.

OLD MAN (*interrupting*). Are you Mistress Chan Chuan? You grieve for your master, while your master grieves for the people. He said in one poem:

Long did I sigh, and wiped away my tears,
To see my people bowed by griefs and fears.

How well he expresses things! How many have there been since ancient times who could sigh and shed tears for the people?

FISHERMAN. True, most poets only praise royal virtues and deeds. Only the knight Chu Yuan sings of the sufferings of the people. Ah, Mistress Chan Chuan, I want to ask you what happened after the knight returned?

CHAN CHUAN. When master came home he was very angry, and somehow all his ceremonial costume had disappeared. He rested for a short time and would not see anybody. Later on, many neighbours came to the back courtyard to call back his spirit, all saying that he was mad and wanting to call his spirit back. I heard that the knight Chin Shang and Councillor Tze Chiao both came to our back garden, and they too said the master was mad. The master was roused by the uproar, so he went to see what was happening in the garden, and became even more angry. Then he ran out, and we don't know where he has gone.

FISHERMAN. Ah, people are so stupid, they may really make the knight mad! I know, what happened today is more than he could bear.

CHAN CHUAN. Sir, I must beg you to tell me. I know nothing of the actual circumstances, and I did not ask him because I dared not.

FISHERMAN. Very well, I will tell you, Mistress Chan Chuan. You know that the Prime Minister of Chin, Chang Yi, had come to our country?

CHAN CHUAN. I have heard master speak of it, saying that he came to our state to make us sever our relations with Chi and ally with Chin.

FISHERMAN. Yes, that is Chang Yi's policy. He wants the barons of the East to fight against each other and become subjects of Chin, so that Chin can conquer all the six kingdoms. But the knight Chu Yuan's policy is just the reverse—you know that of course.

CHAN CHUAN. Yes, I know that already. Our master has done everything in his power to further the alliance with Chi, to resist the savage state of Chin.

FISHERMAN. So our state should count itself lucky to have the knight Chu Yuan, and usually our king listens to his advice. This time, when Chang Yi came, he was unable to carry out his plans. Our king took the advice of the knight Chu Yuan, and would not sever relations with Chi or ally with Chin, so Chang Yi wanted to go to the kingdom of Wei, which is his native country.

OLD MAN. Is Chang Yi a native of Wei?

FISHERMAN. He is, indeed, one of the nobles of Wei. He wanted to go to Wei, and our king was giving him a farewell feast at noon today.

CHAN CHUAN. I heard about that too, but I don't know what happened.

FISHERMAN. Since the king decided to give a farewell feast to Chang Yi at noon today, the queen ordered us to dance at court to the tunes of the knight Chu Yuan's Odes. I was taking the part of the God of the Yellow River. You know, Mistress, I am a dancer. I am very fond of the knight's Odes.

CHAN CHUAN. Ah, is that so, and what happened then?

FISHERMAN. When it was nearly noon, Prince Tze Lan asked us to go to the court to await the instructions of the queen and the knight. When we arrived they were standing there, and the queen then ordered the singers and musicians to go to their places, and told us to rehearse "The Last Sacrifice." The queen and the knight stood on the steps watching us dancing. I cannot remember how many figures we had made, when the back door of the left-hand chamber on the east side was pushed open, two maids came out, drew back the curtain and quietly withdrew. Then the queen ordered the dancing and singing to stop. I was then just before the steps and could hear very distinctly. I heard the queen say to the knight, "Oh, I feel faint! I am falling! Sir Knight, Sir Knight, you—quickly, quickly!" Then she fell into the knight's arms.

CHAN CHUAN. Was the queen not well?

FISHERMAN. Listen to my story. It was just at that point that the king, Chang Yi, Tze Chiao, and Chin Shang appeared from the left-hand chamber. Well, thereupon the queen, unscrupulous and treacherous as she is, suddenly turned herself about, and shouted

aloud: "Sir Knight, quickly, quickly, quickly let me go! Oh, I am really amazed! I am really amazed! In the public court of all places and before all these people, you dare to behave so to me—you must be mad."

CHAN CHUAN (clenching her teeth and wringing her hands). Oh! So that is what the queen is like. ensnaring our master like that!

FISHERMAN. Then the queen ran to the king, and the king lost his temper completely and cursed the knight saying he was mad, and ordered Councillor Tze Chiao and the knight Chin Shang to take him away and deprive him of his rank. I heard that the knight tore off his ceremonial costume in front of all the people.

CHAN CHUAN (biting her lips as if about to cry). Then, then—the master must be in great danger.

FISHERMAN. Of course. She was so treacherous that even we bystanders were taken by surprise.

CHAN CHUAN (with the same expression). The master must be in great danger, must be in great danger.

(Flies away along the walls.)

OLD MAN. Oh! Who could have imagined such injustice!

FISHERMAN. Actually the business was very simple, and could have been cleared up with a public enquiry; but the king was so angry that not only did he not think of asking us who were present—there were many of us, ten dancers, besides the singers and musicians—not only did he not think of questioning us, but when the knight tried to defend himself he forbade him, only cursing and reproaching him. It was in this heavy-handed way that he accused him of madness and improper behaviour at court.

OLD MAN. How could he bear that? He will become mad even if he was not mad before!

FISHERMAN. You did not hear, then, when the knight was being taken away, the indignant truths he uttered?

OLD MAN. What did he say?

FISHERMAN. He said to the queen, "Your Majesty, I little thought you would plot against me like this. There is no shame in my heart, I can look on death without flinching. Whether I am right or wrong, loyal or disloyal, will be judged by future generations. It is not me you are injuring but yourself, our country, the whole of China." Those words of his seemed to unman us all.

OLD MAN. It makes me feel shaken even now.

FISHERMAN. Someone is coming, I will tell you more later.

(The two men remain silent.)

(Chu Yuan enters from the left, wearing a tall hat, long sword and black garment, with his hair flowing loose and his face haggard. He seems a different man from the Chu Yuan of the orange grove in the morning. On his neck he wears a garland of flowers: he chants incessantly, now loud, now soft, walks to the bridge, hesitates, wondering whether to cross or not, then stops and continues along the bank. The chanting, which can be heard intermittently, consists of lines from his Elegies; but they are disconnected, for this poem is now just in the process of creation and has not yet reached perfection):

My firm integrity was proved,

My countenance remained unmoved.

The proverb's truth is now made plain—

"A doctor must himself know pain."

That filial son, the Prince of Chin,

Was by his father charged with sin;
The upright Kun no triumph won,
His great endeavour half undone.
"To blow cold meat, hating the steam
Of hot soup" is not this extreme?
Discarding ladders men would climb
To Heav'n, not moving with the time.
They punished me, though free from blame,
I who held dear a spotless name!
Unlike the rest, they thought me proud,
Now fallen, mocked at by the crowd.

(He chants again and again, with lowered head, walking slowly in the direction of the fisherman.)

FISHERMAN *(standing up)*. You are Sir Chu Yuan, aren't you?

CHU YUAN *(at first ignores him, then becomes angry)*.
Don't call me Sir, I am no longer a knight.

FISHERMAN. Yes, Chu Yuan, excuse me. I knew it. Mistress Chan Chuan was here just now looking for you.

CHU YUAN. Who are you?

FISHERMAN. I am the God of the Yellow River.

CHU YUAN *(thinking he is joking)*. So, you unfeeling wretch!

FISHERMAN. Don't be angry. It was I who took the part of the God of the Yellow River today.

CHU YUAN. So you were there?

FISHERMAN. I understand you best—your wrongs.

CHU YUAN. Thank you very much. *(Bows.)* This is the first comfort I have had.

FISHERMAN. Playing the part of the god I was at the steps, and I heard very clearly all that the queen said to you.

CHU YUAN. Well, I am entirely at a loss to know why she should want to injure me.

FISHERMAN. Sir, I know the reason.

CHU YUAN. You know it? How?

FISHERMAN. Sir, after you were dragged away, the king and queen spoke to Chang Yi for a long time.

CHU YUAN. What did they say?

FISHERMAN. That Chang Yi is a crafty scoundrel. They say that formerly he was a thief in our state, and stole the jade in our Councillor's house. I think that must be true. He is an eloquent ruffian.

CHU YUAN. What did he say?

FISHERMAN. To their Majesties' faces he praised the queen very highly, saying that she was a goddess come to earth, the most beautiful woman in the world; and the king and queen were greatly pleased. He also slandered you.

CHU YUAN. That is natural; I am his enemy. How did he slander me?

FISHERMAN. He said that after seeing the queen he understood why you had gone mad.

CHU YUAN. So! The dirty scoundrel! In that case Chang Yi and the queen were conspiring together.

FISHERMAN. I think so too, and in fact there is proof of it. For after he praised the queen, the king was so delighted that he said, "Chang Yi, I have the greatest respect for you. You say Chu Yuan is a hypocrite. You are absolutely right." He also said, "I shall not listen to the advice of that lunatic. I have decided to

sever relations with Chi in order to ally with Chin and receive the land they offer."

CHU YUAN (*relieved*). In that case it is all the work of that scoundrel Chang Yi.

FISHERMAN. That is what I think. I believe when Chang Yi saw that the king had taken your advice and would not sever relations with Chi, he tried to tempt him with beautiful maidens, thus incidentally forcing the queen's hand, making her disgrace you before the king. Once the king loses faith in you, his plan will succeed.

CHU YUAN. Exactly. then—our kingdom—has been stolen by that thief. (*Loudly.*) Oh, our king and queen, how could you be so foolish!

(The king, queen and Chang Yi enter from the bridge followed by eight guards some distance behind.)

KING (*coming to the ground before the bridge with the others, and pointing to Chu Yuan*). Look, the lunatic is still cursing us.

QUEEN (*ingratiatingly*). Don't be angry. Let's call him here to question him. It will be great fun teasing the lunatic.

KING. Very well. (*Turning back to the guards.*) Two of you go and bring the knight here.

TWO GUARDS (*approaching Chu Yuan*). Sir Knight, the king orders you to approach.

CHU YUAN (*pleased*). Yes, I am coming. (*Looking back to the fisherman.*) Thank you very much.

FISHERMAN. Be on your guard, Sir.

(Chu Yuan, between the guards, approaches the king and queen and bows, ignoring Chang Yi.)

QUEEN (*smiling*). Sir Knight, who gave you this garland?

CHU YUAN. I made it myself just now.

QUEEN. Will you give it to me?

CHU YUAN. If you wish, I will. (*Takes it off his neck.*)

QUEEN (*receives it and puts it round her neck, looking coy*). Oh, how beautiful, how fragrant! This is more precious than any jade or jewelled pendants! I have become the Goddess of the River, the Goddess of the Mountain. (*Becoming even more coy.*) Yes, I am the Goddess of the Witch Mountain. Sir Knight, just now you wanted my love, and now you have given me this garland; when shall we two become as one?

(*The king and Chang Yi laugh while Chu Yuan appears embarrassed.*)

CHU YUAN. Your Majesty, don't be deceived by the plots of wicked men. Please do not think I am mad. for I am not.

QUEEN. Of course you are not. I know that you love me truly, and I love you truly too. I am going to ask Heaven to make you the God of the Witch Mountain—will that please you? (*Looking up to Heaven and praying.*) Great God, Almighty God, I am the Goddess of the Witch Mountain. There is a poet, a genius of the South, whose name is Chu Yuan; he is in love with me, and his spirit has departed. May God take pity on us and make him the God of the Witch Mountain, so that he can take delight with me day and night.

(*The king and Chang Yi laugh more loudly, while Chu Yuan appears more embarrassed.*)

CHU YUAN. I earnestly entreat Your Majesty not to lower yourself.

QUEEN. True, I am very exalted; indeed, I have remembered, I am the Goddess of the Hsiang River, the Queen of Shun. Poor Shun, your spirit is lost in the wilderness. Where are you roaming? (*Looking at Chu Yuan.*) Are you not Shun? Why are you here? Why don't you answer me? Why don't you answer me? We are longing so deeply for you, alas!

(The king and Chang Yi burst out laughing again, but Chu Yuan, no longer able to contain himself, turns angrily on Chang Yi.)

CHU YUAN. Chang Yi, you jade-stealer, what is there for you to laugh at! You treacherous vagabond, you flattering villain, what is there for you to laugh at! Your body is still scarred with the wounds of the whip—what is there for you to laugh at!

(The king and queen continue to laugh, while Chang Yi is taken aback.)

CHU YUAN. You were a thief in our country, you stole the jade in our Councillor's house, for which crime you received hundreds of strokes. Have you forgotten?

(The king and queen continue to laugh, but Chang Yi remains silent.)

CHU YUAN. You went begging to Su Ching, do you remember that? You asked your wife to see whether your tongue was still intact after the beating you got—do you remember that? You were born a native of Wei and a noble of that state, yet when you went to the state of Chin you told the King of Chin to invade the state of Wei, and then when you were back in the state of Wei you enticed it to surrender to the state of Chin. You shameless traitor, you would sell even your native land, what then can you care for ours? You are a deadly

spy; you tell us to sever relations with Chi in order that we Eastern States may be conquered one after the other. You say that Chin will give us land, but who believes your promises?

(The king and queen stop laughing and become serious.)

CHANG YI *(rather angry)*. Sir, I would exact more courtesy, did I not know that you are mad.

CHU YUAN. Mad, do you say! You flattering knave, do you think I do not know what you said to the king and to the queen? What do you think our king is? What do you think our queen is? What do you think I am?

CHANG YI *(interrupting)*. I think you are a lunatic.

CHU YUAN *(also interrupting)*. You said you would look for beautiful girls in the North; you said the queen is a goddess on earth; you said I turned mad for love of the queen. You shameless slanderer, you flattering traitor, how can you have a human appearance!

(He pauses for breath. The king and queen remain silent. From time to time the king glances at the queen, wanting to stop Chu Yuan; but since the queen makes no sign he hesitates.)

CHANG YI *(with assumed calm)*. Have you said your fill? I have no wish to speak with a lunatic before the king and queen. Your madness grows upon you.

CHU YUAN. So my madness grows upon me; but you are scarcely human! You have only the semblance of a human being! You want to kill all the people of China to achieve unity for the kingdom of Chin, and ensure your own prosperity and high position. Do you ima-

gine I do not see through you? You want to endanger our people, you want to spoil our relations with Chi so that Chin can enslave us. Do you think we have not seen through that?

CHANG YI. You are always harping on the excellence of the state of Chi, but of course you have your reasons. I have heard that your late wife was a native of Chi, and she appears to have left a maid with you. Moreover the state of Chi has given you many bribes.

CHU YUAN. You lying scoundrel, you are the one who receives bribes, who sells countries. You crafty cur, do you think I don't see through you? As recently as last night you received one thousand five hundred coins from our queen.

QUEEN (*hastily*). He is mad, he is raving!

KING (*angrily, to the guards*). Take him away.

QUEEN. Take him to the Temple of the Eastern Emperor, and let the diviner Cheng guard him. See that he does not get out to make further trouble.

(*Three guards rush forward and seize Chu Yuan.*)

KING. Take away that pot of his, take away that poker!
(*Another two guards remove Chu Yuan's tall hat and long sword.*)

CHU YUAN. Your Majesty, will you still not realise that the security of our state depends upon you? Do not let our ancestors be deprived of their sacrifice.

KING (*in greater anger*). Quickly! Quickly take him away! (*Two guards escort him over the bridge.*)

CHU YUAN. I care nothing for insults, but I do not want to see our country stolen by that scoundrel, that thief!

(Exit, but his cries can still be heard: "By Heaven and Earth! By our divine ancestors! May Your Majesty realise the truth before it is too late!")

QUEEN. He is hopelessly mad to talk such nonsense.

(To Chang Yi.) Sir, we must apologise for today.

KING. We have really treated you very badly.

CHANG YI. Please don't mention it. I am only very sorry that you have lost such a literary genius.

QUEEN. Actually he is only mediocre; there are some new writers nowadays who promise to be better.

CHANG YI. Which are the chief ones? I would like to know them.

QUEEN. Young men like Sung Yu, Tang Le and Ching Chai seem to be quite hopeful. They may achieve more in future than this lunatic.

KING. Quite. I heard of them some time ago. I certainly must help them.

CHANG YI. It is no doubt of the utmost importance to help young writers; but I have an idea, which occurred to me long ago, of which I am now convinced.

QUEEN. Will you let us know your view?

CHANG YI. I think a writer should confine himself to writing, without interfering with politics.

QUEEN. Yes, yes, quite right. When writers talk about politics they always talk nonsense.

KING. Yes, I shall make that my policy from now on, definitely forbidding writers to speak of politics; and if they insist on expressing their opinion, I shall certainly have them taken and shut in the temple. Now let us go back slowly.

(He starts moving. The queen, Chang Yi and six guards follow. When the king comes out, there are

some passers-by on the road, who now scatter in fear, and gather on the banks. The number of people may depend upon the size of the stage. At this moment Chan Chuan suddenly hurries in from the left side, having by now skirted the whole length of the wall along the moat. When she sees the king, queen and others, she comes to an abrupt halt.)

QUEEN (*sees her and points her out to the king*). That is the maid who came with Chu Yuan's wife, whom Chang Yi mentioned. (*They all stop.*)

CHANG YI. Only some sixteen or seventeen years old—no wonder.

KING. At most eighteen.

QUEEN (*beckoning to Chan Chuan*). Chan Chuan, come here.

(Chan Chuan draws near, frightened, and halts some distance away.) What are you doing here?

CHAN CHUAN. I am looking for our master. I have been all along this wall, but could not find him.

QUEEN. How could you find him? He has lost his reason and jumped into the water, and drowned himself.

CHAN CHUAN (*horrified*). Master drowned!

QUEEN. Quite. Just now, before the temple, we saw a crowd of people drag his corpse out of a pond. It was really a pitiful sight.

CHAN CHUAN (*crying out*). Your Majesty, is it true, what you say?

QUEEN. Of course it is. Don't you believe me? Look, we have got his sword and hat here. (*Showing her the things held by one of the guards.*) He left them on the bank and we picked them up. There was also a pair of straw sandals which we did not take. (*Suddenly re-*

collecting something.) Oh yes—there is this garland too. *(Taking it from her neck.)* I think it would become you well. *(Putting it on Chan Chuan.)*

CHAN CHUAN *(crying aloud in sorrow)*. Ah, Your Majesty, you have killed him. Master! Master! You said they were not injuring you, but yet you were killed. Oh, Your Majesty, you are cruel! Why did you kill our master? He was such a good master. You are really heartless.

QUEEN *(laughing)*. I suppose you are out of your mind too. Why do you say I killed him? You had better be careful.

CHAN CHUAN. You needn't try to frighten me; I am not afraid of you at all. You killed the master. It was you, you, a hundred times you!

QUEEN. Well, well, this is most interesting. People say there are many mad dogs in late spring.

CHAN CHUAN. You like to say, "This one is mad, that one is mad"; do you think nobody knows what you did? Have you no conscience at all? If you had a conscience you would know how great a sin you have committed.

KING *(beginning to be angry)*. I can't stand this girl any longer.

QUEEN *(restraining him)*. Never mind the child. Let her talk; I find it rather amusing.

CHAN CHUAN *(indignantly)*. You consider human beings as playthings; you consider all people as playthings. But you should know what a great crime you have committed. You murdered our master—you know what a great loss that is to our country, what a great loss it is to humanity. *(More soberly.)* There was only one sun in the sky, and you have shot down that

sun; you have devoured it, devoured it for ever. (*Growing more vehement again.*) You are more cruel than the devil, than the sun-devouring dog. Some day you will wail bitterly in the darkness, weeping bitterly to all eternity!

KING. I really can't stand this girl's raving another minute!

QUEEN (*restraining him again*). Don't take it so seriously. Let me ask her a few questions. (*To Chan Chuan.*) Chan Chuan, you are a very young girl, what makes you so vehement? You keep on saying that I murdered your master. But how did I murder him? He turned mad and insulted me; how can you say that I murdered him?

CHAN CHUAN. Do you think nobody saw what you did, nobody knew what you said? You told my master that you felt faint and were going to fall, and you wanted him to support you; but as soon as the king came in, you turned around and slandered master. Do you think nobody heard you, nobody saw you?

QUEEN (*angrily*). You are talking nonsense. Who saw it? Who heard it?

CHAN CHUAN. There were witnesses. You did it in public.

QUEEN. Who made this rumour? Who told you?

CHAN CHUAN. Someone.

QUEEN. Who was it? You tell me!

CHAN CHUAN. If I do, you will injure others.

QUEEN. If you don't tell me, then it is you who are spreading rumours. I shall have your tongue cut out.

CHAN CHUAN. Even if you cut off my head, I shall not tell you.

QUEEN (*seizing Chan Chuan's hair*). Who was it?
Speak, speak, speak!

CHAN CHUAN. Whatever you do, I shall not speak.

QUEEN. Do you think I can't have your tongue cut out?

CHAN CHUAN. Cut it then. I don't want to see people
like you. You cut it! (*Thrusting out her tongue.*)

QUEEN (*to the guard*). Give me the sword. (*The
guard gives her the sword, and the queen unsheathes
it.*) Who was it that told you?

(*The fisherman suddenly steps out from the crowd
on the bank.*)

FISHERMAN (*shouting*). It was I! It was I! Don't kill
innocent people; kill me!

KING (*losing his temper*). Go and seize that fellow!
(*Two guards rush toward him.*)

FISHERMAN (*still shouting*). That you murdered the
knight, I told her. Just now, what the knight said, he
also had from me. Come and kill me! Kill me!

QUEEN (*in great anger*). Who are you?

FISHERMAN (*held by two guards but still shouting*).

I heard you with my own ears. You told the knight
that you were fainting. And I saw you with my own
eyes, falling into the knight's arms. Evidently you
forgot that there were many people beside you, dancers,
musicians and singers. You have committed this crime
for nothing. You have been cheated by Chang Yi.

QUEEN. Another madman! Stop his mouth and take
him to the city.

(*She puts the sword back into the sheath. Two
guards carry out her orders, and take the fisherman
to the city.*)

CHAN CHUAN. So you were acting on the advice of Chang Yi!

QUEEN. Stop her mouth too! Take her to the city! (*To Chan Chuan.*) I shall make you suffer before having you cut to pieces.

(*Two guards carry out her orders, and take Chan Chuan to the city.*)

KING (*starting slowly toward the city, followed by the others. To Chang Yi*). Sir, we've too many madmen in our country. I hope you are not offended today.

CHANG YI (*walking*). Oh, it is of no consequence. There are madmen everywhere. I have great respect for Her Majesty. (*To the queen.*) Your Majesty, you showed great wisdom, especially in your way of shutting madmen's mouths. It is the best method.

QUEEN. Thank you for the compliment.

KING. Yes, madmen should have their mouths stopped, so that they will not talk nonsense and disturb the people.

(*Prince Tze Lan and Sung Yu enter from the city gate, and salute the king and queen. The others stop.*)

QUEEN (*pointing out Sung Yu to Chang Yi*). Sir, this is the leading young writer of whom I spoke just now, Sung Yu.

CHANG YI. Ah, he's a handsome fellow. He looks like a brother to Prince Tze Lan.

QUEEN. Yes, I'm very fond of him. Where are you going, Tze Lan?

TZE LAN. I came specially to meet you and father. I want to ask you about something, Mother.

QUEEN. What is it?

TZE LAN. It's that Sung Yu here doesn't want to go on living at the master's house, and I was hoping to have him in the palace as my companion.

QUEEN. Very good.

KING (*to the queen*). What do you say to making him our Left Minister? (*They start off.*)

QUEEN. He's too young, I'm afraid the other officers would complain. (*To Sung Yu.*) Sung Yu, I'd like to keep you as my steward, would you like that?

SUNG YU. It would be a great honour to be your steward. (*He bows to the queen and king.*)

KING (*pleased*). What a charming boy, we might take him as our godson.

(He enters the city followed by the others. The crowd remains on the stage looking toward the city gate, angry but too cowed to speak. The old man with the net, who is still on the bank, suddenly turns his head, stamps his foot and sighs.)

CURTAIN

ACT V

SCENE ONE

TIME: Night, with bright moonlight.

SCENE: The palace walls. In the centre, slightly towards the right, is a cage in which Chan Chuan is imprisoned. Her clothes and appearance are dishevelled, and the garland of flowers is already withered, but she still wears it about her neck.

A guard, carrying a spear, paces to and fro in front of the cage, guarding it. Prince Tze Lan and Sung Yu enter from the right-hand side by the wall. Sung Yu has already changed into a gorgeous costume.

GUARD (on the alert). Who goes there?

TZE LAN. I am Prince Tze Lan.

SUNG YU (at the same time). It is Prince Tze Lan.

(The guard stands to attention waiting.)

TZE LAN. Is Mistress Chan Chuan imprisoned here?

GUARD. Yes, just here.

TZE LAN. I have a few words to say to her, if you will allow me.

GUARD. Yes, Your Highness may speak to her; but, begging your pardon, since it is my duty to guard here I cannot leave the place.

TZE LAN. There is no need to apologise.

(The two of them walk toward the bars.)

TZE LAN. Could she be let out for a little while?

GUARD. If Your Highness will take the responsibility, it is all right.

TZE LAN. Then will you please let her out?

GUARD. Yes, Your Highness.

(He takes a key from his pocket and goes to unlock the cage.)

CHAN CHUAN *(inside the bars)*. No, I am not going out! I don't want to be under an obligation to anyone.

(Guard hesitates and looks back at Tze Lan.)

TZE LAN. Chan Chuan, why should you mind? They say you were whipped until your whole body was covered with wounds. It would be good to come out and relax a little.

CHAN CHUAN. No, I don't want to be under an obligation to anyone.

SUNG YU. Why be so obstinate?

CHAN CHUAN. I don't want to talk to you, I don't want to see you. Go away, don't come near me!

TZE LAN. All right, there's no need to be so fierce. If you don't want to come out, we won't force you. I only want to say a few words to you, not meaning to trouble you at all.

(The guard makes way for him, standing a little further away on the right-hand side of the cage.)

CHAN CHUAN. I've just told you, I don't want to talk and I don't want to see anyone.

(Having said this she buries her face in her hands, and lowers her head.)

TZE LAN. Whether you talk or not, and whether you look at us or not, is up to you; but we came simply in order to help you.

(Chan Chuan remains in the same position, not saying a word.)

TZE LAN. Chan Chuan, my one wish is to save you. I can't stay here long, so I will just say a few blunt words. *(Pause.)* I hope you will say to me that you like me. Even if in your heart you don't like me, it doesn't matter; for if only you will promise to listen to me and wait on me, I can tell Mother at once to have you pardoned, and Mother will certainly agree. So will you or not?

(Chan Chuan remains in the same position, silent.)

TZE LAN *(after a pause)*. You say. Just a single word will do, a simple "Yes" or "No"; just a single word will do. Speak, please speak.

(Chan Chuan remains in the same position, still without a word.)

TZE LAN *(more tenderly)*. If you won't speak, then just move your head a little. Either nod or shake your head; I shall certainly honour your decision.

(Chan Chuan remains in the same position, absolutely expressionless.)

TZE LAN. Ah, you are just like a graven image.

SUNG YU. Chan Chuan, I know you are probably most displeased with me, but I want to show my friendship too. You must not disregard Prince Tze Lan's offer. Probably you don't realise it yourself yet, but your life may be destined to end tomorrow. According to the custom of our country, the death sentence is always

carried out at dawn. When a prisoner is taken in the afternoon, if his offence is slight he will be put in prison, but if his offence is serious and deserves death he will be put in a cage, and the next day at dawn he will be led out to have his head cut off in public. No doubt you are unaware of the fact, but that dancer who was arrested at the same time as you was put in prison, while you were put in a cage. That shows that the queen will certainly condemn you to death. You really carry obstinacy to the extreme; you criticised both the queen and the king, so no wonder you got into trouble. Now Prince Tze Lan has come in all sincerity, setting aside his dignity, to try to help you. I think you had better not be obstinate any more.

(Chan Chuan makes no movement.)

SUNG YU (after a pause). Chan Chuan, even if you care little for your own life, I know you care very much for your master. Now your master's fate is the same as yours. He has angered both the queen and the king, and in their presence insulted a most honoured guest. One thing I am sure of, master's span of life cannot outlast tomorrow. Prince Tze Lan has come here to save you, and also to save the master. If only you will agree to the prince's request, the prince can immediately plead with the queen, and then not only will you be saved, but also master. This I can guarantee. *(Pause.)* I think, if you don't feel assured, you can ask for master's freedom as the condition of your acceptance. *(Turns to Tze Lan.)* Prince Tze Lan, what is your opinion? I think Chan Chuan may make this proposal to you, namely that you obtain from the queen tonight a pardon for master and for Chan Chuan.

If you get the pardon tonight, she will agree. If not, then let no more be said about it. What is your opinion?
TZE LAN. I have no objection; it all rests with Chan Chuan.

SUNG YU (*to Chan Chuan*). You heard, Chan Chuan. What do you think? This is a most considerate proposal.
(*Chan Chuan still remains motionless.*)

SUNG YU. Ah, why don't you give some indication of your feeling? Just nod or shake your head.
(*Chan Chuan still remains motionless.*)

SUNG YU. There's no way out. She is even more obstinate than master. You don't care for your own life, but don't you want to save master from impending death?

CHAN CHUAN (*cries out in reproach, like water bursting through a dam*). Have you no feeling at all? Master is already dead, yet you still keep up this farce.

SUNG YU (*taken by surprise*). What! Master dead?

TZE LAN. Who told you?

CHAN CHUAN (*crying*). Who told me? The queen told me.

TZE LAN. When did Mother tell you?

CHAN CHUAN. When she saw me outside the East Gate.

SUNG YU. How did he die?

CHAN CHUAN. He leapt into the pool before the temple and drowned himself.

SUNG YU. Did the queen see it?

CHAN CHUAN. The queen said she saw people dragging out his body, and the queen had taken back his hat and long sword, and she gave me this garland which master was wearing. (*Showing them the garland.*) This is the only thing left of his! (*Crying*)

aloud.) Oh, Master, Master! You have been murdered for nothing. It was so easy for them to destroy loyalty, to betray our country. You have been murdered in vain. I know you cannot rest in your grave, you cannot rest in your grave! . . .

(Sung Yu and Tze Lan remain silent in sorrow.)

GUARD *(coming forward)*. Your Highness, may I say a few words?

TZE LAN. What have you to say?

GUARD. The knight is not dead, of that I am quite sure. The queen said that to deceive her.

CHAN CHUAN *(stops crying)*. What? What's that you say?

GUARD. Don't be upset, Mistress Chan Chuan, your master isn't dead. I was one of the guards who escorted the queen and king to the temple. How could the knight have jumped into the water—that was all made up. When we reached the East Gate we saw the knight shouting on the moat: "Oh King, oh Queen, how could you be so foolish!" As ill luck would have it we reached the bridge at the East Gate just at that time, and the king heard what he said.

SUNG YU. What happened then?

GUARD. The king was very angry, and wanted us to arrest him at once, but the queen thought differently, saying it would be fun to make game of the lunatic. So the king sent us to fetch him.

SUNG YU. And after he came?

GUARD. When he came, the queen made game of him. But the knight was dressed in a strange costume, wearing a tall hat, a long sword and a garland about his neck—the one Mistress Chan Chuan is wearing

now. The queen began by asking him for the garland, which she put on herself, and then she pretended to be mad. Sometimes she would pretend to be the Goddess of the Mountain, sometimes the Goddess of the River, all the time making fun of the knight. The king and Chang Yi, who is prime minister or something like that in the kingdom of Chin, laughed like anything. Then the knight cursed the prime minister of Chin.

SUNG YU. Oh, so that's what happened.

CHAN CHUAN (*changing her attitude, listens intently, showing great concern*). . . .

GUARD. Hah, he cursed him like anything too. He cursed him for a petty thief

SUNG YU (*to Tze Lan*). That's right; formerly Chang Yi stole the jade from our Councillor's house.

GUARD. He cursed him for a traitor who had betrayed his country. It seems he was a noble of the kingdom of Wei, yet when he went to the kingdom of Chin he persuaded the kingdom of Chin to invade the kingdom of Wei, and when he went back to the kingdom of Wei he persuaded the kingdom of Wei to surrender to the kingdom of Chin. The knight said that one who did not even love his own motherland could not care for our country. I think the knight was right there. Then

SUNG YU. What then?

GUARD. Then he cursed him for deceiving the king and queen, for trying to spoil the friendly relations between our country and Chi, so that the kingdom of Chin might profit. He cursed him for a spy sent by the king of Chin, saying he was not even human.

SUNG YU. What did Chang Yi do?

GUARD. Chang Yi had nothing to say to his abuse, only retorting foolishly that the knight's late wife was a native of Chi, and he also mentioned Mistress Chan Chuan.

TZE LAN. What did he say about Mistress Chan Chuan?

GUARD. He said Mistress Chan Chuan came with the marriage, and is also a native of Chi. Then he said the knight had been bribed by the state of Chi, and had received money from them.

SUNG YU. I can imagine how angry master must have been.

GUARD. Yes, the knight was very angry, and he cursed Chang Yi saying that it was he, the cunning scoundrel, who received bribes from all sides, saying that even last night he received one thousand five hundred coins from the queen.

SUNG YU. Why should the queen give him money?

GUARD. How should I know? But as soon as the knight said that, the queen became very angry, and said that he was really mad and talking nonsense. Then the king ordered us to arrest him, to take off his hat and sword, and have him taken to the temple.

SUNG YU. That's right. We heard that he was shut up in the temple.

CHAN CHUAN. Is that true?

GUARD (offended). Why should I want to deceive you? You must have heard for yourself, when the fisherman came out to stand up for you, didn't he say that it was he who had told you what you had said, and also he who told the knight what he said? Evidently, . . .

CHAN CHUAN (*realising it*). Oh yes, evidently after I left the master came, and after the master had gone I came back.

TZE LAN. All right, but let us go back to what we were talking about. I mustn't stay here too long; the time does not allow me to loiter here. Chan Chuan, the master is still alive. I believe I can save both you and him. It all depends on your attitude.

CHAN CHUAN. My attitude? My attitude is like master's. Master said, we should live heroically and die heroically. Master would never consent to live in shame, nor will I! That is my attitude.

TZE LAN. All right, all right, then I have been talking in vain. We must congratulate master on becoming a hero.

SUNG YU. And, Chan Chuan, we must congratulate you on becoming a heroine!

CHAN CHUAN. Sung Yu, I hate you most! Master's teaching was wasted on you, you shameless, spineless writer!

SUNG YU. Call me what names you like; everybody has his own path. Your Highness, let us go.

TZE LAN (*starting to leave, then turning back*). Chan Chuan, what is your final decision?

CHAN CHUAN. I shall never yield to you! You want to save the master, using me as an exchange; you really are beasts!

TZE LAN (*pulling Sung Yu away with him*). All right, let us go, let us go! This is too much, too much. . . .

(*They leave the stage from the same side.*)

(*The stage is quiet, the guard again paces to and fro. Presently the moon disappears. A watchman hold-*

ing a red lantern and wooden clapper enters from the right.)

WATCHMAN *(to himself)*. What changeful weather.
There will probably be a storm.

GUARD. What time is it?

WATCHMAN. I am going to sound the third watch.

GUARD. Then it is nearly midnight.

WATCHMAN. Yes.

(The watchman passes. The guard is suddenly seized with an idea as he watches his retreating shadow. He wants to call out but thinks better of it twice. When the watchman has left the stage the guard makes up his mind, and calls out.)

GUARD. Watchman! Come back for a moment!

WATCHMAN *(offstage)*. What is it?

GUARD. I must trouble you for something.

WATCHMAN *(enters again)*. What is it?

GUARD. Please come over here.

WATCHMAN. Well, what is it after all? Remembered some business?

GUARD. Yes Have you got the keys of the palace?

WATCHMAN *(claps his pocket, making a clashing sound)*.

In the evening, you know, a watchman is more important than the king. Even if the king wants to go out, he has to ask us.

GUARD. Sorry, you will have to take my place. I want to borrow your lantern.

WATCHMAN. Only you must be quick. I am on duty, and if I delay the watch I shall get into trouble.

(Gives him the lantern.)

GUARD (takes the lantern, putting it and the spear by the cage. Looks through his pockets). Bother it, I haven't got what I need.

WATCHMAN. Really, you must hurry.

GUARD. Very sorry. (He suddenly puts both his hands round the watchman's neck and throttles him. Then the guard takes off his dress, takes his keys and clapper, opens the cage and speaks to Chan Chuan.) Mistress Chan Chuan, I am going to save you. Don't hesitate. Under cover of this darkness, dress yourself as the watchman and we will run out together. We will go to rescue the knight.

CHAN CHUAN. Why did you kill the watchman? Wasn't that cruel?

GUARD. You don't understand, Mistress; this is just a trick. It is called life-strangling. He is not dead yet, and I can bring him to life again. Come out quickly.

(Chan Chuan comes out with difficulty. Although she is covered with wounds she can still walk. The guard takes off her chains and gives her the watchman's cap and coat.)

GUARD. Quickly change into these. Oh, you cannot move easily. I will help you. (Puts the cap on her, and, intending to put on the coat, makes a move to take off the garland.) We may throw this away.

CHAN CHUAN (quickly). No, I want it. Put the coat over it.

(The guard does as she says, then chains the hands of the watchman with the chains, at the same time puts a gag in his mouth, drags him into the cage and locks it. Then through the bars he presses on his neck, and brings him back to consciousness.)

GUARD (to the watchman). Very sorry. Now we are going out.

(*Chan Chuan holds the lantern and beats the clapper. She leaves the stage slowly from the right. The guard follows. The stage turns dark.*)

SCENE TWO

SCENE: *The front court of the Temple of the Eastern Emperor. It resembles the court scene in the second act, having four pillars and three chambers, but no curtains. The walls of the three chambers are decorated with images of the gods. In the centre of the middle room are images of the Eastern Emperor and the Lord of the Clouds, while at their side the Spirit of the Mountain and the Deceased Warrior wait on them. On the right-hand side the God of the Sun rides a yellow steed, and on the left the God of the Yellow River rides a dragon; both of these figures are in profile, the head of the horse facing left, and the head of the dragon facing right. In the left-hand chamber there is a dragon boat, its prow turned toward the right. The Princess of the Hsiang River sits in the boat playing a reed-organ, while the Lady of the Hsiang River plies the oar in the stern. In the right-hand chamber, above clouds, appear the Great Fate and the Young Fate. There are doors in the back walls of the left and right-hand chambers, the left-hand door being open and the right-hand door closed. Each chamber is lighted, but dimly, while outside there are thunder and lightning and great gusts of wind.*

The knight Chin Shang enters stealthily with two guards from the right corner. They are masked.

CHIN SHANG (to one guard). Tell the diviner Cheng to

come here.

GUARD. Right, sir.

(Enters the door on the left of the image of the Goddess of the Hsiang River. Soon he reappears with a lean, stern old man, carrying a lantern in his left hand.)

(Chin Shang takes off his mask and steps forward.)

CHIN SHANG. Just now I sent someone with a secret missive from the queen. Have you received it?

DIVINER *(bows)*. I have, Sir Knight.

CHIN SHANG. What have you done with the criminal?

DIVINER. He is still locked in the little room behind the hall.

CHIN SHANG. When do you intend to do away with him?

DIVINER *(hesitating)*. Sir Knight, I find the task a difficult one.

CHIN SHANG *(surprised)*. What?

DIVINER. Chu Yuan is well-known. Many people idolise him. If we poison him, won't there be trouble?

CHIN SHANG. Ha, it is just because of that we must act quickly. The fellow is good at winning people's hearts. He wants to usurp the throne; he is very ambitious. He even wanted to lay hands on the queen. Now that he is imprisoned here, many people in the capital are indignant. In a few days, when the news spreads, it will arouse the whole country; while when it spreads outside our kingdom, we shall receive protests from the different states East of the Pass. Then if we do not let him go, the people will revolt; but if we let him go, it will increase his arrogance, and spoil the friendship of our two states. The kingdom of Chin has agreed to give us two hundred miles of territory; but

if that were to happen, needless to say, we should forfeit it. So we must act tonight. Poison him with poisoned wine, then set fire to the temple. Later you can spread a story that it was destroyed by lightning, then people will believe he met his death in an accident, and we shall have no more trouble.

DIVINER. Doesn't Chu Yuan abstain from drinking, Sir Knight?

CHIN SHANG. Think of some way to persuade him. Make him believe you are very kind and sympathetic. Don't keep him locked up all the time in that little room; let him come out and walk about. He is shackled, so that he cannot escape.

DIVINER (hesitating). Are you not making a mountain out of a mole hill?

CHIN SHANG (angrily). What do you mean?

DIVINER. I wonder if you don't overestimate him. Actually all he can do is to write popular love songs, and hold forth in a high-sounding manner. If you spare him, the people will not make trouble. Why you should burn such a magnificent temple for the sake of a mad poet I cannot understand.

CHIN SHANG. Ha, so you grudge this tumble-down temple of yours! What does it matter if it is burned? The king will build you a really magnificent new one. But say no more. The queen wills that the temple be burnt, and the queen wills that you poison him. And it must be promptly done, no later than tonight. You know the queen's temper. Though you are her father, if you do not carry out her wishes she will forget her duty to you and have you executed with the knight

tomorrow. (*Putting on his mask, to the guard.*) Let us go. Take the small path out of the city.

(*Chin Shang leaves by the left with the two guards.*)

(*The diviner stands silent in the hall for a moment, then he makes up his mind, and enters the door on the right of the image of the Lord of the Sun. He reappears with Chu Yuan.*)

DIVINER. Sir Knight, do as you please here, if you care to stroll about. You used to like the frescoes here. I shall leave you to yourself.

(*Chu Yuan nods. The diviner leaves by the door on the left.*)

(*Chu Yuan, bound hand and foot and with heavy shackles on his legs, still wearing the black gown which he wore during the day, and with his hair dishevelled, wanders about the court; but because of his chains he walks with difficulty. Sometimes he stops and looks around, his eyes gleaming with anger. When he gesticulates with his hands, he has to move both hands at the same time; otherwise he keeps them before his breast.*)

CHU YUAN (*addressing the wind, thunder and lightning*). Wind! Roar, roar! Roar with all your might! In this pitchy darkness without the light of day everything is asleep, wrapped in deep slumber or dead; it is time for you to roar, for you to roar with all your might!

Yet, however you roar, you cannot awake them from their dreams, you cannot bring to life what is dead, you cannot blow away the darkness which weighs heavier than iron upon our eyes. But you can at least blow away a little dust, a little sand, at least cause a few plants to stir. You can rouse the Tungting Lake,

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the Yangtze River and the Eastern Sea to roar in concert with you.

Ah, I long for the Tungting Lake, I long for the Yangtze River, I long for the Eastern Sea, that mighty and boundless expanse of waves, that mighty and boundless expanse of strength! That is liberty, dancing, music, poetry!

Ah, the great poem of the universe! You wind, thunder, lightning, you who roar in the darkness, brightening all things, you are all poetry, all music, all dancing. You great artists of the universe express your utmost power, vent your boundless wrath and smash to atoms this dark universe, this gloomy universe!

Thunder! Is your rumbling the sound of your chariot wheels? Carry me to the edge of the Tungting Lake, to the bank of the Yangtze River, to the shore of the Eastern Sea! I want to see the plunging waves. I want to hear the deafening thunder of water, I want to drift out to the small islands where there is no intrigue, no filth, no selfishness and no human beings. I want with you, with your voice and illimitable ocean, to leap into boundless and unrestricted freedom.

Ah, lightning! Keenest sword of the universe! My sword has been taken away, but although they can take away my material sword, they cannot take away the sword that is immaterial. Lightning, sword of the universe, you are also the sword of my heart. Pierce, pierce, pierce, pierce through this darkness which is heavier than iron! Although you pierce it like piercing water—for once you withdraw it closes together again—

yet at least you shed light for a short time, and light of a splendid and dazzling brightness!

Oh, light, I adore you! I want to pay homage to you, to do obeisance to you. For I know your element is fire, yours is the greatest element in the universe. You are at the horizon, you are before my eyes, you are all around me. I know that you are the life of the universe, my own life. You are myself! My blazing life, my smouldering wrath, will they not burst into a blaze?

Burst, my body! Burst, universe! Let the red flames leap forth like this wind, like the plunging sea, until all material things, all filth, are consumed in your flames, and let this darkness be consumed, the cloak of all evil!

Destroy this Eastern Emperor, destroy this Lord of the Clouds! You clay and wooden idols, what virtue have you, high up on your pedestals? You are the parents who engendered darkness!

You God of the Sun, what deity are you? Men call you the Son of God, yet you cannot move away from your horse. Your face is red—is it with shame? Ah, you are all hypocrites, you creatures of clay and wood, without feeling. I want to destroy you, destroy you utterly, especially your horse! If you have any power, then come down and walk!

You Great Fate, you Young Fate, your vaunted power lies only in deceiving people! You Goddesses of the River, your vaunted power lies only in weeping! Weeping! What is the use of weeping? Tears! What is the use of tears? You can only cause bamboos to grow, yet bamboos are used by masters to beat their

slaves. Get out of your boats, get down from your clouds! I want to destroy you!

Ah, you are there too, God of the Yellow River. You, you were the first to give me comfort. I saw it quite clearly! When I was taken away they led me up a high slope; the guards wanted to rest, and I stood there too, looking back at the city gate. I saw it clearly, quite clearly! I saw them bait Chan Chuan, I saw you come out from the crowd, gesticulating and protesting. Finally you were taken to the city gate, and Chan Chuan too.

But I, I have no tears. And the universe, the universe has no tears! What is the use of tears? We have only thunder, lightning and wind, but no weak rain! This is my will, the will of the universe. Rise up, wind! Roll, thunder! Flash, lightning! Destroy all things that slumber in darkness, destroy them utterly!

(Here the diviner Cheng enters the stage from the left-hand door by the image of the Princess of the Hsiang River, holding a lantern in his left hand and a cup in his right.)

DIVINER. Sir Knight, are you chanting poetry again? Your voice is louder than wind and more disturbing than the thunder. Ah, a stormy night like this is really terrifying. I don't even dare go out to close the temple gates. Why don't you ever go to sleep? I thought since you seem to have chanted aloud for so long, your mouth must feel dry, so I have prepared a cup of sweet wine for you. There is nothing to eat with it, but it will moisten your throat.

CHU YUAN. Thank you very much. Please put it on the altar. I cannot move freely, excuse me.

DIVINER. Well, no one knows what the world is coming to. Formerly they used to say, "Punishments are not for knights; ceremony is not for the common people," but now the old order is passing. Now even the knight Chu Yuan has to wear shackles. Sir Knight, if I had the key I would certainly unlock your shackles for you; but unfortunately they took them all away.

CHU YUAN. Thank you very much. The chains do not hurt me; in fact their presence increases my resolution; only they make it difficult for me to move.

DIVINER. I think you must be very thirsty. Let me hold this wine for you to drink. You had better sleep too before day comes.

CHU YUAN. Thank you very much, but I am not thirsty now. I seldom drink wine, but when I feel thirsty later I shall certainly drink it.

DIVINER (*putting the cup on the altar*). Yes, you had better take your time. Actually wine is not a bad thing. If you drink it in small quantities, restricting yourself as to the amount, it can be very beneficial.

CHU YUAN. Yes, I know that. My trouble is that when everybody else is drunk I still remain sober. I never had any patience with half measures.

DIVINER. That's true. That's just where good people suffer. Speaking of your trouble, I feel rather to blame.

CHU YUAN. Why?

DIVINER. Sir Knight, you have probably forgotten, but the queen is my daughter.

CHU YUAN. Ah, yes; certainly most people have forgotten it.

DIVINER. That's natural. Her mother died early, and because I had my work of divination I did not bring her up well. Then after she entered the palace, we had still less contact. Now she is going from bad to worse, to treat such a loyal councillor as you in this way.

CHU YUAN. Sir, believe me. I bear no grudge against the queen. She usually appreciates my poems, and has often put in a good word for me to the king. Regarding today's affair, I could not understand it at first; but later I learned that it was all the work of Chang Yi. The common people are very exasperating too; they have no judgement of their own. Thus when Chang Yi said I was mad, everybody believed him at once. They consider the phoenix as a chicken, the unicorn as a lamb. How can I bear it? Thus the more sympathy they show, the more disgusted I feel. What do I want with their worthless sympathy?

DIVINER. That's true, most of the common people are too stupid to learn.

CHU YUAN. On the other hand, my feelings are rather at variance, for although I dislike their stupidity, in another way I like it. Similarly, although I admire the queen's cleverness, in another way I dislike it. I think there ought to be some way to resolve this conflict. I would like people who are clever and stupid, simple and complex, sage and lunatic. Do you think this possible?

DIVINER. This is what is meant by "A man of great wisdom is like a fool; a man of great cunning is like an idiot."

CHU YUAN. No, not like that. I don't want men to pretend to be fools, I want them innocent. I want them all to have good tempers, good natures, good abilities.

But I cannot achieve it myself! My temperament is too radical, I realise that, but am powerless to correct it. What do you think I had better do? Should I be a peasant? I cannot use the hoe. Should I go abroad? I do not want to forsake my country. Should I beg the queen's forgiveness? Although she can work with Chang Yi, I most certainly cannot. What then do you think I should do?

DIVINER. Sir Knight, I am very sorry, but if you ask me such questions I don't know how to answer you. Actually divination has always proved useless. Although I am a diviner myself, or perhaps just because I am a diviner, I realise its uselessness. It seemed useful in ancient times, but not now. To tell the truth, I am here just deceiving people; but of course I can't deceive you. Sir Knight, a profession like this of mine, deceiving people, might suit you well if you could do it. We have realised that saying, "The biggest fool seems wise, and the biggest idiot seems cunning." Ha, ha, ha! . . . The wind seems to have dropped a little; you had better go in and rest, don't you think?

CHU YUAN. No, thank you very much, I am not sleepy; but please suit yourself.

DIVINER. How about drinking a little wine?

CHU YUAN. I shall certainly do so later.

DIVINER. You are not suspecting this wine is poisoned?

CHU YUAN. If it is, I shall welcome it. Ah, my motherland is betrayed! I cannot bear to live to see its unhappy fate!

DIVINER. True, these are such troubled times that even old people like myself have no desire to live on.

CHU YUAN. When all men are desperate, then the life force will burst through.

DIVINER. All right, take your time. I am going to rest for a little while.

CHU YUAN. Please do as you want. It will be some time before dawn comes.

(Taking the lantern, the diviner leaves by the same door. The great wind gradually drops, and the lightning and thunder cease too; moonlight appears again, shedding light on the court.)

CHU YUAN. Ah, universe, you have become tranquil, and strangely enough my mind has undergone a curious change. It seems to me that man is still most lovable, after all. Even the people one dislikes most, if they speak a few words in one's loneliness, can bring peace to the mind. *(Walks in the court.)* Ah, God of the Yellow River. *(After walking for a little while he stands before the God of the Yellow River.)* Please let me still make you my friend. Let me speak with you again. Do you know, I am most concerned now for Chan Chuan, for she has been arrested. She it is who respects me most, she considers me as her father, her master, thinking me more precious than her own life. *(Pause.)* She it is who can comfort me most. I consider her too as my own daughter, as my most dear pupil. Although she watched those people making game of me in the back garden, although she took my garments out, I am persuaded it was Sung Yu who made her do so. Sung Yu, I feel, is not dependable. He is a dark horse. *(He takes up the cup on the altar thinking to drink, but puts it down again.)* I don't like the smell of this wine. Oh, God of the Yellow River, do you like wine? What

is your position now? I saw people arresting you too. You are suffering for me, suffering for the sake of justice. Ah, I really do not know how to repay you.

(Paces up and down in the court.)

(At this juncture the guard and Chan Chuan enter from the right-hand side, and Chu Yuan, seeing their shadows, is startled.)

CHU YUAN. Who is it?

CHAN CHUAN. Ah, Master is here! I am Chan Chuan.

(Making a great effort, Chan Chuan staggers forward and kneels before Chu Yuan, clasping his knees and looking up at him. She seems to be laughing and sobbing at the same time.)

CHU YUAN *(sadly)*. Ah, Chan Chuan, how did you come here? Why are there wounds on your face? Why are you in this costume?

CHAN CHUAN *(in broken sentences)*. Master, I am very happy.... Please...do not ask me.... I... I do not want to say anything; I just want to be like this, like this... holding my master's feet... so to die.

(Chu Yuan sheds tears, caressing Chan Chuan's head with both hands, and looks up at the sky for some time. Chan Chuan still looks up at Chu Yuan, breathing hard.)

CHU YUAN *(looking down, comforting her)*. Chan Chuan, I did not think I should see you again. You must have escaped. You have conquered death. Do you know what happened to Sung Yu?

CHAN CHUAN *(still breathing hard)*. He has betrayed you, Master. He has moved to the palace with Prince Tze Lan.

CHU YUAN. Let him go. Only those not afraid of hardship and peril can climb the heights. The road of righteousness is tortuous, it only welcomes the brave What happened to the fisherman?

CHAN CHUAN. I heard he has been put in jail.

CHU YUAN. Chan Chuan, are you thirsty?

(Chan Chuan nods.)

CHU YUAN *(taking his hands off her head, takes the cup from the altar)*. Here is a cup of sweet wine. Drink it.

(Chan Chuan takes the cup and drinks it to the dregs very eagerly, then remains kneeling on the ground clasping Chu Yuan's knees, looking up at him. Chu Yuan with both hands takes the cup and puts it on the altar again, stroking her head. Suddenly Chan Chuan's expression changes, and she begins to shiver.)

CHU YUAN *(looking down, his two hands circling Chan Chuan's neck, caressing her)*. Ah, Chan Chuan, how are you? How are you?

CHAN CHUAN *(shaking her head, with glassy eyes)*.

Master . . . that wine . . . that wine . . . was poison. But I . . . I am very happy . . . very happy! . . . I am going to die for you, to save your life—how lucky I am! I am a daughter of the people, Master. You taught me, and from you I learned the people's responsibility. I have served you faithfully, for you are the soul of our country I love our motherland, so I cannot but love you. . . . Master, I always wanted to dedicate my life to the motherland, as you taught us; but never thought my wish would come true today. I have given my humble life for your precious existence.

Master, how lucky I am! (*Growing weaker.*) Take good care of yourself, Master. The kingdom of Chu needs you, all China needs you! You must live long for the people, for truth Please allow me to call you father, please let me consider myself your daughter.

CHU YUAN (*shedding tears, clasps her tightly*). Chan Chuan, my benefactor, I promise, I promise.

(*Lowers his head and kisses her forehead.*)

CHAN CHUAN. Father Ah, Father Father

. . . .

(*She gasps and shivers more, then with a great convulsion dies in Chu Yuan's arms. All lights have gone out except for the moon. Chu Yuan remains silent, holding Chan Chuan's lifeless body, looking up at the sky. Anger shines in his eyes. The guard in front has been standing silently before the court, but now he ascends the steps and approaches Chu Yuan.*)

GUARD. Sir Knight, excuse me, who gave you the wine?

CHU YUAN (*angry but calm*). Cheng, the diviner here.

(*Remains in the same position.*)

GUARD. So. The queen's father, I know him.

(*He quickly enters the left-hand chamber, while Chu Yuan remains motionless as a statue. Presently the guard comes out again quickly.*)

GUARD. Sir Knight, excuse me, I have killed that criminal Cheng, and on his body I found this secret order. I will read it to you, sir. "By the queen's order, you are to poison the lunatic tonight, and then set fire to the temple to destroy the evidence. Written by the knight Chin Shang." Such was the secret order, so, in accordance with the queen's wishes, I have set

the diviner's bed on fire. This wicked temple will soon disappear together with his wicked body.

CHU YUAN. Good, I hope you will help me to lift Chan Chuan on the altar. We should give her a splendid burial by fire.

GUARD. Let me take off your shackles first. (*Taking off his shackles.*) Mistress Chan Chuan is still wearing the watchman's dress, it should be removed.

CHU YUAN (*taking off the dress*). Oh, she is wearing a garland. (*Takes off the dress.*)

GUARD (*assisting Chu Yuan and speaking at the same time*). Master, this was the garland you wove. The queen took it from you outside the East Gate, and then she gave it to Mistress Chan Chuan. Her whole body has been beaten—see how her hands and face are all covered with wounds, she was beaten so cruelly. The queen wanted to have her killed tomorrow, and she was put in the cage over which I was guard. Near midnight your two pupils, Sung Yu and Tze Lan, came to plead with Chan Chuan. They wanted her to yield to the prince's wish and be his maid, then they would have saved her. But Chan Chuan refused. Her words and her spirit moved me, so I decided to save her. I heard from Sung Yu that tonight you were in danger too, so I decided to come with her and save you We fled from the palace, and by a trick we put the watchman in Chan Chuan's place. When I put the watchman's dress on her, she still refused to throw away the garland.

(*The two men lift Chan Chuan onto the altar, her head to the left.*)

CHU YUAN (*putting the final touches to Chan Chuan, discovers a scroll on her, and unrolls it*). Oh, this is the "Ode to the Orange" I wrote in the morning. I wrote it for Sung Yu; I suppose he must have given it to you. Chan Chuan, you deserve this poem. I little thought this would be an elegy I wrote for you.

GUARD. Sir, will you let me read it then? We shall sacrifice to Mistress Chan Chuan.

CHU YUAN. Good, please read the latter part. (*Giving him the scroll and pointing out the place.*) You can add anything you like at the beginning and end.

(*Chu Yuan moves to Chan Chuan's feet, and stands there respectfully.*)

(*At the left wing, fire and smoke already begin to appear.*)

GUARD (*standing on Chu Yuan's right, a little behind the altar, unfolds and reads the elegy*). Chu Yuan, the knight of Chu, with his follower, makes sacrifice to Chan Chuan. (*He recites*):

Your youthful and impetuous heart
Sets you from common men apart,
And well-contented I to see
Your resolute integrity.
Deep-rooted thus you stand unshaken,
Impartial, by no fancies taken;
Steadfast you choose your course alone,
Following no fashion but your own.
Over your heart you hold firm sway,
Nor suffer it to go astray;
No selfish wishes stain your worth,
Standing erect 'twixt heaven and earth.
Then let not age divide us twain,

Your friend I ever would remain.
Be noble still without excess,
And stern, but yet with gentleness.
Though young in years and in complexion,
Yet be my master in perfection.
Then Po Yi as your standard take;
His virtues as your model make.

May your spirit come to the sacrifice!

*(Chu Yuan bows and the guard bows behind him.
The ceremony at an end, the guard rolls up the scroll
and returns it to Chu Yuan.)*

CHU YUAN. Now all is over, what is your name?

GUARD. Master, you do not need to ask my name, I
want to follow you forever. Just call me your follower.

CHU YUAN. What do you want me to do now?

GUARD. Master, why do you ask me?

CHU YUAN. Because my life is given me by you and
Chan Chuan. Since Chan Chuan is dead I ask you.

GUARD. Master, our country needs you, and China
needs you. It is too dangerous here, you must not stay.
I come from north of the Han River. If you please, I
would like to take you there. We northerners all ad-
mire you and have come under your influence. We love
truth and goodness, and resist aggression in defence of
our country. Master, we northerners will protect you
as we would protect our own eyes, you who are the soul
of our country.

CHU YUAN. Very well, I shall do as you say. I am re-
solved to defend our motherland and our freedom side
by side with the people north of the Han River. Quickly
change your dress, there is the costume ready.

(Pointing to the watchman's cap and coat.)

GUARD. That's right, I have been foolish, I never thought of it. It is lucky we have it.

(Changing his dress.)

(Fire and smoke become more apparent.)

CHU YUAN *(holding high the scroll in his hand).* Ah, Chan Chuan, my daughter, Chan Chuan, my dear pupil, Chan Chuan, my benefactor, you have set the place on fire, you have conquered darkness, you are forever and ever the angel of light!

(Holding the scroll by one end he throws it toward Chan Chuan, and the scroll unfolds itself over the corpse.)

(The curtain descends slowly, and behind it "The Last Sacrifice" is heard):

The rites performed, the wizards strike the urn,
Pass round the sacred herbs, and dance in turn;
With grace the lovely damsels dance and sing:
"Asters for autumn, orchids for the spring,
Through endless years this sacrifice we bring."

THE END

Midnight, January 11, 1942.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kuo Mo-jo (born in 1892) is a Chinese poet, historian, political activist and fighter in the international peace movement. In his youth he studied in Japan, and on his return in 1921 began his literary career and founded the well-known literary group, "The Creation Society." The inspiring songs in his two collections of poems *The Goddess* and *Starry Sky* and his play *Three Women in Revolt* aroused many young people to take part in the revolutionary struggle.

During the Northern Expeditionary War of 1926-1927 Kuo Mo-jo was deputy director of the Political Department of the national revolutionary army. When, in 1927, Chiang Kai-shek's betrayal of the Revolution became apparent, he openly exposed Chiang's crimes in the press. He participated in the Nanchang Uprising of August 1927, and after its failure fled to Japan, where he made a study of ancient Chinese history. His *Studies in Ancient Chinese Society* is the first historical study by a Chinese scholar from a Marxist stand. He also made a great contribution to the study of ancient Chinese by his work on oracle bones and bronze inscriptions.

After the outbreak of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression in 1937, he returned home to join in the war effort. During the war he worked persistently by various means in the Kuomintang-controlled area, and

became an outstanding standard bearer of progressive artists and writers there. His historical play *Chu Yuan*, written in 1942, gave forceful expression to the wrath of the people in the Kuomintang-controlled territory at that time. The production of the play was an important political event.

Kuo Mo-jo's many literary and political writings and the stirring speeches he made at various meetings during and after the war, won him the love of the people and the hate of the Kuomintang reactionaries. Finally in 1947 he was forced to take refuge in Hongkong, where he continued to write significant articles on the study of ancient Chinese society and the history of political thought. These essays were later published in two volumes, *Ten Critiques* and *The Bronze Age*.

In 1949, at the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, he was elected member of the Central People's Government Council, and Vice-Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. He was also appointed Vice-Premier, Chairman of the Committee of Cultural and Educational Affairs of the Government, and President of Academia Sinica. In 1950, when the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace was set up, he was elected chairman.

He participated in the world peace congresses in 1949 and 1950, and became a well-known fighter in the international peace movement. At the second congress he was elected a member of the World Peace Council, and has since taken an active part in all the work of the World Peace Council. In 1952 he was honoured with an award of the International Stalin Prizes for the Promotion of Peace Among Nations.

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